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Chicana/o Discourse

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Introducción

El creciente interés por la producción artística chicana hizo dos años atrás que los estudiantes graduados del departamento de español y portugués de UCLA decidieran dedicar el número extraordinario de *Mester* que ahora llega a sus manos al estudio del discurso chicano.

Desde un comienzo, la idea de un número especial dedicado al discurso chicano quiso lograr que un amplio espectro de producciones chicanas pudieran ser motivo de análisis y discusión. Por ello, se optó por abrir el campo de estudio más allá del de la producción literaria, ampliándose a cualquier tipo de producción discursiva. Esto permitió dar la voz, nunca mejor dicho, a los lingüistas, quienes se preocupan y levantan acta diariamente del ejercicio vivo de la lengua. No hay muchos campos más interesantes para el lingüista que el del habla chicana, que se encuentra en constante evolución y tensión entre las otras dos hablas que permiten la comunicación a su comunidad, el español y el inglés.

Mester incluye en sus páginas tres estudios lingüísticos del discurso chicano: el primero es un análisis realizado por Claudia Parodi sobre los préstamos léxicos existentes entre el español chicano y el español mexicano; los dos artículos sobre "Consonantal Variations in Chicano English" de Joyce Ho y "Vowel Shift in Northern New Mexico Chicano English" de Pilar Hernández son el punto de partida para posteriores análisis sobre aspectos lingüísticos, que hasta la fecha no habían sido comprobados y que las autoras ofrecen a quienes deseen retomarlos.

No cabe duda de que la oralidad es parte íntegra del discurso chicano. Antes de que la literatura chicana alcanzara el respeto necesario para llegar a los círculos económicos editoriales y de distribución, el único medio de propagación y de mantenimiento de la vitalidad cultural propia era la oralidad; la transmisión de tradiciones, de historias familiares, de costumbres entre los mayores y los más jóvenes permitió conservar la conciencia de origen. Aunque nuestro capítulo lingüístico se ocupa de la parte física, material, del habla chicana, *Mester* vio la necesidad de profundizar en la oralidad; por ello, se decidió intentar conseguir entrevistas con creadores chicanos para que, oralmente, expresaran sus experiencias y opiniones sobre el tema de este número, sobre el que ellos ya se han expresado en forma escrita.

Contamos con un grupo importante de entrevistas (Cherríe Moraga, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, Helena María Viramontes, Héctor Calderón), todas ellas muy

interesantes y de gran valor informativo no sólo para aquellos que se ocupan de la producción literaria de los entrevistados, sino para todos a quienes atraigan unas vidas remarcables, repletas de hechos cotidianos que, por la manera de sentirlos y de relatarlos, se convierten en únicos.

Al ser ésta una publicación de carácter académico, la gran mayoría de la investigación ha tomado ese derrotero. Por ello, el análisis de las obras de autores consagrados dentro del mundo literario era inevitable y deseable al mismo tiempo. No ha sido sino hasta hace unos pocos años en los que la producción artística centrada en y para el mundo chicano se ha visto aceptada en los círculos académicos tradicionales y así ha comenzado a estudiarse en las aulas universitarias con seminarios y materias dedicados específicamente a este menester. Aunque menciono que los autores analizados en este número están hasta cierto punto consagrados, pues ya han conseguido entrar en los círculos de distribución editorial, todavía son innumerables los caminos a explorar desde el punto de vista del crítico literario dedicado al campo de la creación chicana. Este número de *Mester* consigue iniciar alguno de esos senderos, con aportaciones muy valiosas por su originalidad e innovación, que abren el camino a futuras aproximaciones.

La frontera y su influencia es el tema central, desde diferentes puntos de vista, de los artículos que publicamos de Héctor Calderón y José Saldívar. Un estudio sobre un grupo teatral chicano de principios de siglo lo presenta Alicia Arrizón. La comparación entre autores de la llamada "historia literaria" con autores chicanos es el centro de los trabajos de José López, quien estudia a Juan Rulfo y Tomás Rivera, y de Bridget Kevane, que compara al Inca Garcilaso y a Sandra Cisneros. Esta misma escritora es parte central de los estudios de Juan Busch y Juanita Heredia. Por último, el tratamiento de la mujer es el tema común de los artículos de Eleuteria Hernández, que muestra el concepto de Jorge Ulica sobre la mujer mexicana en los Estados Unidos, y el de Fanny Arango-Keeth, quien analiza a la nueva mujer chicana.

Estoy seguro de que este *Chicana/o Discourse Issue* muestra con claridad uno de los valores más importantes de la cultura chicana que es el estado permanente de cambio, de crecimiento artístico. Este aspecto vital se debe, sobre todo, a la continua influencia que la cultura anglosajona y la cultura mexicana tienen en los individuos afincados en las comunidades chicanas. Esa lucha persistente, que en ocasiones ha producido y produce frustraciones y desánimo, a largo plazo ha dado lugar a la aparición de mujeres y hombres de gran riqueza personal, miembros de una rica comunidad, cuyas manifestaciones se analizan y enseñan en este número.

Pero si este logro es válido por sí mismo, para mí, con este volumen especial como modelo, se da un paso importante para la consecución de otro objetivo: el respeto no sólo para el mundo chicano sino para todas las otras comunidades hispanas quienes se ubican en los Estados Unidos, que han mostrado el mismo valor en el deseo y en el éxito de mantenimiento de sus raíces culturales frente a la influencia anglosajona, y que han hecho crecer el aprecio hacia su propia identidad.

La estricta definición de "chicana" y "chicano" no permitió incluir en este

número de *Mester* el análisis de las realidades y producciones de los artistas de estas otras comunidades hispanas. La lucha permanente, que en este número se expone en relación con el mundo chicano, es idéntica a la que sostienen esas comunidades que se establecieron en este país venidas de El Salvador, Cuba, la República Dominicana, Puerto Rico y de todos aquellos lugares donde la cultura base es la hispana. En todos los casos, de ese continuo estrago por conservar las propias raíces sin aislarnos de la sociedad anglosajona que nos nos influye diariamente, surge y seguirá surgiendo un rico producto artístico y social, al que contribuyen todas las comunidades hispanas; estas producciones de origen y resultado multicultural, que están en metamorfosis continua, sirven para aumentar el aprecio y el respeto por nuestras propias culturas entre todo tipo de públicos.

Confío en que este número extraordinario anime a los especialistas a continuar su labor de divulgación de los logros artísticos chicanos y de los miembros de las demás comunidades hispanas que están desarrollando su producción en los Estados Unidos. Y confío en que el lector en general continúe creciendo en su respeto y apreciación de estas creaciones reflejo de una sociedad viva, en continuo cambio y enriquecimiento.

José Ramón Núñez Astray
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MESTER

Contemporizing Performance: Mexican California and the Padua Hills Theatre

> The Spanish word of welcome, *Bienvenido*, is the traditional greeting given at the Padua Hills Theatre and Dining Room near Claremont, California. And it is repeated often by the hostess who receives guests at this unique playhouse in the Sierra Madre Range of the San Gabriel Mountains, thirty-five miles east of Los Angeles. Her attractive Mexican costume and her gracious words set the mood for a visit to one of the most delightful and distinctive spots in Southern California, an institute dedicated to inter-American friendship. (Deuel 1)

The history of Padua Hills Theatre, and its most famous performance group, the Mexican Players, has hardly received any critical attention. The several existing studies are limited to historical approaches to the foundation and development of this theatre.[1] My interest in both this theatre and its players arises out of a larger concern with the representation and misrepresentations of Mexican identity in theatre and performance prior to the emergence of the Chicano movement.[2] My most recent research has focused on California and Texas between the 1930s and 1950s, examining how certain ethnic and gender constructions first defined and then sustained a notion of what I call the "Mexican Southwest." My approach to the story of the Mexican Players of the Padua Hills Theatre is thus both less historical and more deeply embedded in the context of cultural criticism than previous studies have been.[3] This essay addresses the power relations between the Anglo founders and directors of the Padua Hills Theatre and the Mexican actors and actresses whose performances brought the theatre international acclaim as a center for Spanish and Mexican folk-drama. A basic assumption underlying the analysis is that all representation in performance is inseparably bound to ideology. As Jill Dolan has put it, "ideology circulates as a prevailing term in performance from its creation to its reception"(41). The implications of that intertwining are often far-reaching, as the complex relationship between the Mexican Players and their chief benefactor, Bess Adams Garner, demonstrate.

OVERVIEW OF PADUA HILLS THEATRE

The Padua Hills Theatre, located three miles north of the Claremont Colleges in Claremont, California, was built in 1930 as a community center and home of the Claremont Community Players on land that once had been part of the great Rancho San José (Carol Webb 79).[4] The original tract was enormous and had been granted to Don Ignacio Palomares and Don Ricardo Vejar in 1837 by Governor Alvarado of California on behalf of the Mexican government. When the United States government confirmed the ownership of Rancho San José in 1875, the north side of Claremont was excluded. In 1925, 2,000 acres were purchased by residents of Claremont with the intention of preserving the land's natural beauty. As Deuel (5) and Blakeslee both point out, the direction of this effort was entrusted to Herman H. Garner. The original plans, which called only for a playhouse, were expanded to include an art center, shops featuring imports from Mexico, and a dining room adjacent to the theatre.[5]

The Claremont Community Players made Padua Hills one of the outstanding examples of the little theatre movement in the United States, but the impact of the Great Depression forced a cut in their productions from every weekend to two weekends per month. The Depression also reduced the time individual members of the Claremont Players had available for acting, as many had to work longer hours in their non theatre-related jobs and others spent whole days simply hunting for work. In the hope that a change in residence would help reverse the company's financial decline, the Claremont Community Players elected to leave the Padua Hills Theatre. Their departure marked the advent of a new era of exclusively Mexican folk drama and musicals at Padua Hills.[6]

PEONES AND ENTERTAINERS: THE ROLE OF THE MEXICAN PLAYERS

> Obviously, a young member of the Mexican Players is more than just an employee with a full-time position. He is an actor in the theatre; a waiter or a bus boy and an entertainer in the dining room; and an apprentice in the arts of song and dance. These young men and women set up the tables in the dining room before lunch and dinner and then serve the guests. During the meals they leave their duties for a few minutes at a time to dance and sing with the musicians. At night and on matinee days, after clearing the tables, they hurry to the dressing rooms to prepare for their roles in the current play. (Deuel 59)

Ironically, the same dire economic conditions that forced the Claremont Community Players to abandon Padua Hills gave the Mexican Players the opening that eventually established them as the major entertainment component of the

institute. These actors and actresses were the cooks, dishwashers, waitresses, waiters, and janitors who staffed the dining room adjacent to the theatre. Their origin as a company was not accidental: Bess Garner happened to see the kitchen staff acting out stories about Mexico for their own entertainment. She encouraged them to perform, advising them to do more pantomime and less talking because the audiences could not understand Spanish. In April 1931, the Mexican Players debuted at Padua, opening with a performance of *Noche mexicana* (Figure 1).

At first, the Mexican Players alternated weekend performances with the Claremont Community Players. As the Depression wore on and the Claremont Players left, the future of the Padua Hills Theatre became increasingly uncertain. In spite of the Depression's critical impact, the Garners did not want to see the theatre close. The Mexican Players offered a seemingly ideal solution: they would do double duty —at a single pay— in their roles as service workers and performance artists. Even this use of "cheap laborers" might not have been enough to save the Padua Hills Theatre had the Garners not also used their personal wealth to help sustain the Mexican Players.

According to David Streeter, who knew the Garners personally, Bess Adams Garner was a rich woman who did not know what to do with her money.[7] Garner felt guilty toward the poor Mexicans, whom she saw as losing control of their own cultural history as a result of a complex process of Americanization in which the traditional roles of such institutions as the family, the Catholic Church, and the educational system, were seriously eroded. Cultural critic Jon Slott (10) described Mrs. Garner's interest in the Mexican Players somewhat less artistically as initially, "a real estate venture; then a hobby" that eventually culminated in "a magnificent obsession."

According to Deuel (15-20), and further documented by *Padua Hills Theatre Collection*, the Mexican Players were formally established as an artistic component of Padua Hills with *Serenata mexicana* (Figure 2) which was scheduled for regular presentations in 1931 and 1932. *Serenata mexicana* was produced by Charles Dickinson who continued to direct the Players for over fifteen years.[8] The play depicts a day's events in a little town in Mexico. According to the "Program Notes" on the Padua Hills Theatre Collection for this production:

> The Serenata is a simple story of life in a village street somewhere—anywhere in Mexico. It opens at the end of siesta time and closes with the evening closing of a little Inn or Fonda at the end of the street. People come and go—boys sing, girls dance, youth love. We hope you will enjoy watching this very simple but sincere picture of a life that must be a part of the background of all Californians.

(Figure 1: Cast of the first performance of the Mexican Players in "Noche Mexicana". Padua Theatre Hills Collection at Pomona Public Library. L. to R. Maximina Zúñiga, Philip García, Josephine García, Lupe González, Sarah Gómez, Florence Alvarez, Manuela Huerta, Jesús Huerta, José García, Gregorio Ornelas, Miguel Vera, Emma López, Marie Gómez, Grace Ramírez, Juan Matute, Beatrice Anaya, Flavio Vera, and Rachel Sepúlveda.)

(Figure 2: Scene from "Serenata Mexicana". Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library. From L. to R. Sarah Gómez, Marguerite Park, Samuel Valadez, Maximina Zúñiga, Juan Matute, Eva Rodriguez, Miguel Vera, Jesús Huerta, Felix Moreno, Manuel Madrid, Pauline Anaya.)

Serenata mexicana was followed, the same year by *El Rancho San Antonio*. Written and directed by Fred and Mary Harris, this play deals with the early days in Pomona. According to the Harrises in the "Program Notes," the play attempts to portray "the charm and life of the great Spanish Ranchos." *Serenata mexicana* celebrates its Spanish setting as the lost paradise of California, a land that once belonged to the Spanish settlers of the past century. The play honors the natural beauty of the "old California."

All of the Mexican Players performances were popular, but two in particular, the *Posadas* (Christmas celebrations) and *Ysidro*, became ritual events at Padua. Beginning in December 1932, with *Christmas at mi rancho bonito*, the *Posadas* were celebrated as part of the theatre's repertoire every Christmas season. The *Posadas* ceremony dates back to colonial times in Mexico. This popular ritual mixes indigenous practices and beliefs with folklore and music to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The *Posadas* use of the dialectics of "good" versus "evil" as the dramatic construction also celebrates humanity. Community members in the *barrios* of Mexico and the American Southwest still practice this ceremony during the Christmas season.

The second traditional performance, the play *Ysidro* (Figure 3), was first produced in May, 1933. *Ysidro* enacts another ritual deeply rooted in Mexican culture. In rural areas of Mexico, celebrations in honor of Saint Ysidro, are an annual event. Like the celebration of *Posadas*, this ritual involves a religious ceremony mixed with indigenous beliefs and Christian values. In the pre-Hispanic era, the first eight months of the Aztec calendar were dedicated to the water gods. The Indians performed ceremonies emphasizing a communion with nature and the essential forces of the universe. When the Spanish colonizers introduced a new calendar and a new religion, they permitted the Indians to keep the rituals they had always used to bring rain to a land of drought. However, the Christian saint San Ysidro, not the Aztec gods, was glorified as the bearer of rain and crops.

Neither ritual is traditionally performed as entertainment or as a folkloric exhibition. Theatrical performances like those held at Padua Hills introduce an element of commercialism that is inherently exploitative.

REPRESENTATIONS OF OTHERNESS: CONSTRUCTIONS OF ETHNICITY AND GENDER

When the Padua Hills Theatre was incorporated as a nonprofit educational organization in 1935, one of its stated aims was to promote and encourage interest in the arts and manners of early California and Mexico, and to promote friendly relations between the U.S. and Mexico and other Latin American countries. However, the particular view of Mexico and early California held by the trustees was a value-laden, Anglocentric one. Mexico was seen as the "other," the subject of a romantic and idyllic memory of the "old California." This idealized construc-

(Figure 3: Scene from "Ysidro." Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

tion is clear in the following passage written by Bess Garner:

> To many people, Padua Hills means a California summer's night, a full moon, dark-eyed boys and girls, soft Spanish voices—and romance. And it is on such a night that plaintive violins, strumming of guitars, flowers bright under the fiesta lights or pale in the shadows of old olive trees bring something back to California. To the tall white theatre on its hillside against the blue mountains there comes then something of Latin beauty and grace which California and the Southwest once had and must not lose.[9]

Mrs. Garner's artistic imagination was dominated by this yearning for a lost "Latin beauty and grace." Under her guidance, the plays performed by the Mexican Players during the 1930s unfailingly evoked romantic notions of Mexican identity and nationality. The following selections, taken from the program notes of various productions, document this pattern.[10] All depict the subject of representation within romantic notions of identity and nationality. The subject formation is constructed as an integral part of a defined "colorful" and "beautiful" space:

> "Rosita" is a human little story of the love affairs of a group of sweethearts ("*novios*") in any town in Mexico. We see Chema and Teresa, the accepted lovers, though never un-chaperoned; the more or less turbulent affair of the little sister, Chiquita and Pedro; and specially the one of Luis and Rosita; how they meet, woo, and wed.
> *Rosita* (1933), produced under the direction of Bess A. Garner.

> Please say the "x" in Mexico as if it were an "h." And if you can make a sort of a little "tz" sound after the word, it will mean not only lovely Mexico, but something like "Mexico, how swell!" and you will have the idea of the play you are going to see.
> *Qué bonito México* (1936), produced under the direction of Bess A. Garner.

> The *calle del beso* is a little street in Guanajato which received its name because it was so narrow that lovers walking down opposite sides of it could kiss each other without leaving their own side of the street—hence, the Street of the Kiss.
> *Calle del beso* (1938), produced under the direction of Charles A. Dickinson.

> The region around Guadalajara, the capital of the state of Jalisco, is called the "*Tapatío*." Famed for its gallant charros and beauti-

> ful señoritas, it has both cosmopolitan and rural qualities blended in its picturesque life which may be found only in Mexico. The "*Rancho Tapatío*" of the play might be found within an hour or two of Guadalajara.
> *Rancho Tapatío* (1938), produced under the direction of Charles A. Dickinson.

The representation of exotic costumes, laughter, guitars and romance abound. In each of these folk dramas, the basic setting involves a colorful land occupied by beautiful *señoritas* and handsome *charros*. Romance develops the central dramatic event for characters whose lives are represented as part of a never-ending *fiesta*. In *Rosita* (Figure 4), the character ended with a wedding procession in which the play's cast moved out through the auditorium and into the lobby, followed by the audience. Romances such as *Rosita* and *La calle del beso* are performances that generalize Mexicans, creating the mythical perception of a romantic ethnic "other."

In plays such as *Qué bonito México* and *Rancho Tapatío*, which celebrate the attractiveness of Mexico and its people, the female subject becomes the "object" of this representation, a symbol of a romantic nationality. At the same time the female representation may embody a submissive sex appeal (Figure 5). Here, gender becomes a social construct and the product of dominant culture. Within a power dynamic, females are fashioned into genderized objects, constructed to benefit others. Overall, the settings in *Rosita*, *Qué bonito México*, *Calle del beso*, and *Rancho Tapatío*, could be taken as symbolizing the Garden of Eden before Eve decided to liberate Adam and challenge God.

The idealized representations of ethnicity and female subjectivity that characterized so many of the plays performed by the Mexican Players in the 1930s had their counterpart in films. As Antonio Ríos Bustamante (21) has noted, Hollywood created and exploited images of the *femme fatale* and the Latin lover during this same time period.

Significantly, the ethnic misrepresentations found in both these media provided audiences with a reassuring, though false, vision of a glorious past at a time when dramatic changes were occurring in U.S. society at large. This contrast is well described in the program notes of *México, mi tierra* (1937):

> A composite picture of the Republic of Mexico, its colorful cities, rugged mountains, high plateaus, and tropic shores. A colorful saga of great nation revealed in the song and dance of its people. The pulse of a new world race mingled in primitive Indian rhythm and stately old world grace.

The lure of the "other" is especially strong during times of social and economic upheavals such as occurred during the Great Depression. In her study of images of

Figure 4: Cover page of the "Program Notes." Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

(Figure 5: Scene from "Qué bonito México". Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

Mexican-Americans in U.S. literature, Marcienne Rocard has noted "a romantic nostalgia for the past, for a people of unchanging values" (51) in the work of writers of the 1930s and 40s.[11] She writes:

> With the apparent failure of American Civilization, a failure capped off by the Depression, some writers turned to people with a different set of values. Just like Presley, Norris's turn-of-the-century romantic poet, Paul Horgan's poet and musician, David and Edmund Abbey respectively, find their inspiration in the Mexican people. David writes poems about them while Edmund, in his symphony titled *Mexicana*, attempts to capture the Mexican soul. (53)

Bess Adams Garner's interest in and support of the Mexican Players was firmly rooted in her admiration for Mexicans as a "different" people. Like writers of her generation such as Ernest Hemingway, Richard Summers, and John Steinbeck, Bess Garner found her inspiration in the Mexican people. The Mexican Players represented for her what the *Paisanos* did for Steinbeck in *Tortilla Flat* (1935).[12] According to her idealistic views of ethnic relationships, the aim of Padua Hills was to give the young women and men working there the opportunity to express their Mexicanness. Moreover, Garner proposed to instill in these young Mexican women and men a pride in their heritage and nationality. Ironically, her efforts were based on misconceptions of the historical and social condition of her own staff. Some of the Players were from Mexico, but most of them were the children of Mexican immigrants living in Southern California.

The plight of U.S. Mexicans did not especially interest Bess Garner. In fact, although she described herself as a "sympathetic observer" of a "country struggling with its problems" (*Notes* 164), it was Mexico folk culture that captured her heart. She gave little or no attention to social, economic and political conditions under which Mexicans and Mexican Americans existed during the 1930s:

> I do not know what will happen to Mexico socially, politically, or economically. And I've written and am writing no book telling about that. I have loved my excursions down the paths leading away from the main road with its problems, back to the folk background, the cultural roots of the people I find so dear. (*Notes* 164)

That Mrs. Garner apparently had no difficulty holding "dear" a people whose actual daily existence roused in her neither interest nor sympathy underscores the nature of her infatuation with Mexico. Her "obsession" with that country's "fascinating aesthetics" was fatally flawed by an Anglo ethnocentrism she never even recognized, much less overcame.[13] Believing herself sincerely committed to an

"authentic" reproduction of Mexican folk culture at Padua Hills, she saw no inconsistency in limiting storylines to simplistic romances and stage settings to colorful and exotic designs and costumes.

In describing her relationship with the Mexican Players, Bess Garner suggested that she was a student and they were the teachers:

> Five years ago at Padua Hills, Claremont, California, a group of Mexican young people and I started the Mexican Players of Padua Hills, and we have been entertaining our theater audiences since that time with plays, using the folk-lore, customs, songs, and dances of their native land. I knew no Spanish, little of Mexican people, and nothing about Mexico. At first our material had to come entirely from the young people of the group, struggling with their inadequate English against my ignorance. (*Notes* 1)

In fact, the plays were based on simple stories formulated either by Garner herself or by Charles Dickinson and recorded only in outline form. During rehearsals, the dialogue and action came automatically out of the natural movements of the young actors and actresses. Although improvisations in the style of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* enlivened the Mexican Players performances, it would be naive to think that Garner's role as director did not influence the artistic development of the Mexican Players. As "patron" and founder of the group, she was in a position of power.

The influence of Garner's perception of authentic Mexican performances is clear in the plays produced by Dickinson, as well. For example, in 1937 Dickinson directed *La Adelita* (Figure 6), a play loosely based on an episode in Pancho Villa's life. The "Program Notes" from the Padua Hills Theatre Collection summarizes the plot this way:

> The Mexican Players of the Padua Hills Theatre present a dramatic legend of the revolution based upon a folk tale woven around Pancho Villa's favorite song, "*Adelita*," and portraying the vivid life of his followers, their loyalty, spirit, the invaluable services given them by their women without which their campaign would have been futile, and specially the supreme sacrifice of Adelita.

In this version of "*La Adelita*," *la soldadera* (woman soldier) sacrifices her life for revolutionary hero Pancho Villa. Adelita is depicted as a jealous woman who plans the murder of her lover. When she realizes that her jealousy is groundless, she takes the bullet meant for the General.

The play not only misrepresents the story of Adelita, it transforms this strong,

(Figure 6: Scene from "La Adelita". Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

courageous soldier into a powerless victim of her own passions, and it does so at the hands of an Anglo director. Dickinson's play "kills" the legacy of women such as Adelita, Valentina, and many other *soldaderas* of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, a legacy that has enriched the feminist historical background of women of Mexican descent from north to south of the border. The revolutionary spirit of Mexican women is distorted and weakened by the exaltation of romanticism in the play. *Soldaderas* were women who fought, foraged for food, cooked, nursed the wounded, and performed many other services during the Mexican Revolution. Most of the *soldaderas* were Indians or poor *mestizas*. *Corridos* (ballads) such as "*La Adelita*" and "*La Valentina*," gave recognition to the participation of *soldaderas* in the revolution. (Soto 43-45)

Marina, directed by Bess Adams Garner, and performed during the same year *La Adelita* was staged, is similarly flawed. The play's plot involves an Anglo woman trying to learn about Mexican culture (Figures 7 and 8).[14] This is a distortion of the highest magnitude. Marina, or Malinche, as she was known before the conquest of Mexico, was given to the Mexican *conquistador* Hernán Cortés by a Tabascan tribe.[15] She became his mistress, mother of one of his children, and a translator. It has been suggested by many cultural critics and historians that without Malinche the conquest of Mexico would have been difficult, and perhaps even impossible. The importance of Malinche, not only as symbolic figure, but as a powerful historical character, lies in her representation of the ethnic split between the indigenous people and the Spanish *conquistadores*.

Marina's interpretation, featuring an Anglo Malinche searching for Mexicanness, is a glaring example of Anglo ethnocentrism in relation to the "ethnic-gender-other." *La Malinche* and *La Adelita* deserve better than to be reduced to comedies that deny the historical and psychological reality of female subjectivity within a historical context.

CONCLUSION

Although my interests lie mainly in describing and analyzing the ways in which the Padua Hills productions in the 1930s contributed to a negative stereotyping of Mexicans and "old California," the story of the Mexican Players would be incomplete without some discussions of the positive effects of their long reign. Bess Adams Garner's accidental discovery of the talents of her service staff was providential for these young people as well as for the Garners. The Great Depression drastically affected both Anglo and Mexican society in Southern California; theatre people were no exception. In *Hispanic Theatre in the United States*, Nicolás Kanellos describes the impact of the Depression on the Hispanic theatre in the Southwest and the Midwest. He maintains that artists in the Southwest who wanted to practice their profession had three choices:

(1) [they could] return to Mexico and eke out a living there;

(2) stay on in the Southwest and place their art at the service of

(Figure 7: "Marina." Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

(Figure 8: Scene from "Marina". Padua Hills Theatre at Pomona Public Library.)

> the church and community charities, but give up hopes of making a living from the stage;
> (3) or move to New York where the growing influx of Puerto Ricans during the Depression and war years gave them a second life on the stage, principally as vaudevillians. A few other artists were able to land jobs in Spanish-language radio and small tent theatres that toured the border. (11)

The Mexican Players, with their dual roles as performers and workers, were so valuable to the Padua Institute that they weathered the Depression with much less hardship than their counterparts elsewhere. The Mexican Players' popularity may also have helped insulate them from the upturn in anti-Mexican sentiments that accompanied the Depression. State and Federal deportation and repatriation campaigns were initiated in Southern California during the Depression, and the influential nativist tract *The Alien in our Midst* was published in 1930. Working at Padua Hills gave the Mexican Players a measure of emotional and psychological protection as well as an economic boost.

The popularity and profitability of the Mexican Players, coupled with the Garners own interest in Mexico, led them, along with most of the Anglo executives of Mexico. Deuel notes:

> Believing that the future of Padua Hills lay with the Mexican Players, the Garners plunged whole-heartedly into the task of learning about Mexico. They had been interested in Mexican culture for many years, but they were in no way steeped in information about the country. In order to be of more assistance in the role of director which had fallen to her, Mrs. Garner made the first of many trips to Mexico, where she collected material for future plays, bought costumes to be used at Padua, and made contacts with government officials which later proved to be of great value. (27)

One positive outcome of the Garners' productive relationship with the Mexican government was the arrival at Padua Hills of several outstanding Mexican artists, sent by the Ministry of Education. The visitors lived and worked with the Players. The first of these invited instructors, Luz María Garcés, visited the institution in 1934 (Deuel 33).[16] The next year, Francisco Sánchez Florez, an artist from Guadalajara, joined the Mexican Players. His visit was particularly significant because he produced *¿Idolos muertos?* (*Are the Idols Dead?*, Figure 9) which introduced to Padua Hills the traditional *Jamaica* (Deuel 35, Blakeslee 53).[17]

In the fall of 1935, actress Graciela Amador visited Padua as an instructor. She became very popular with the artistic members of the Players. She was not only an actress and director, but a great musician. She was a relative of Casilda Amador, a noted performer of the group (Figure 10 and 11).

(Figure 9: Scene from "¿Idolos Muertos?" Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

(Figure 10: Graciela Amador. Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

(Figure 11: Casilda Amador. Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

(Figure 12: The cover page from the program notes of "Aguila y Nopal. "Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library.)

As Deuel (35) points out, in November of 1935, Graciela Amador directed *Aguila y nopal* (*Eagle and Cactus*, Figure 12), a musical play that represented a nationalist vision of Mexico with its different regions.

The improvisational nature of the plays produced by Garner and Dickinson also provided some scope for the talents of the individual actors and actresses. Characters often engaged the audiences in conversations, making the "spectatorship" feel as an essential part of the play. For example, the wedding procession in *Rosita* followed by the audience. Of course, there were limits on the areas of production the Players could affect. In the 1930s, Mexicans were virtually absent from the technical side of stage production and management

Many changes took place at Padua with the beginning of World War II.[18] After some of the Anglo producers and directors were drafted, women began to have more of a presence in the institute. In the "News Notes" on the Padua Hills Theatre Collection of 1943, Herman Garner announced:

> How can the work go on with these two directors and so many others drafted? Well, Hilda Ramírez has taken on the main load of the directing in addition to her responsability for the costumes. She is doing a swell job, too.[She] Has very excellent ideas. Miss Marjory Allen who is now living at Padua Hills will be available for consultation and assistance. Mrs. Dickinson [is] back on the job on the technical end.

Nevertheless, the false notions of Mexican identity, culture, and history that characterized so many of the Padua Hills productions during the 1930s live on. Racial stereotyping and distortions of ethnicity and female representation vis-a-vis Mexicans and Latinos in the U.S. have not disappeared. Nor is there an end to the romanticism that plagued the Mexican Players. I agree with the Mexican writer Luis Quintanilla, who pointed out in 1943 the Anglo habit of confusing passion with romanticism. In his book *A Latin American Speaks*, Quintanilla noted:

> Here we find ourselves confronted with another current prejudice. "*So, so romantic*" is usually follow by a wistful sigh straight from the heart of an otherwise normal, undemonstrative schoolteacher. One prejudice is as bad as the other. The U.S.A. has no more a monopoly on freedom than we have on romance. Of course, we love romance. But be careful with the word "romantic." Latin Americans are passionate, not romantic people. (32)

Real change will require re-educating those in power so that the views of the dominant group can be brought more fully into line with the true social, cultural, and political identity of Mexicans and other minorities in the U.S.

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NOTES

[1]*Mexican Serenade: The Story of the Mexican Players and the Padua Hills Theatre* was the first published historical account of the Padua Hills Theatre. There are also two unpublished master's theses: Selma Elizabeth Louisa Litle, "The Padua Hills Project Introduces Mexican Folk Lore Into California Culture," University of California at Los Angeles, 1943; and Margaret Simpson Hall, "Padua Hills Mexican Theatre: An Experiment in Inter-Cultural Relations," Claremont Colleges, 1944. The most recent publication is Norma Hopland Blakeslee's, "History of Padua Hills Theatre," *Pomona Valley Historian* 9 (Spring 1973), 46-66.

[2]I am specifically referring to the emergence of *Teatro Campesino* and its role in the Chicano movement of the 1960s. The Chicano theatre movement can only be understood in relation to a larger context: political, social and cultural movement of which it was a part. Luis Valdez, with his Farm Workers Theatre recreated the "actos" (acts or sketch), in which social and political issues were represented in a very comical way. The actos themselves depicted events and characters familiar to all who had grown up in the barrios.

[3]My perspective in no way detracts from the significant contributions of Deuel and Blakeslee, whose studies have been invaluable in documenting the historical experience of the Mexican Players and in disseminating information previously available only in archival form.

[4]As a part of the Valley Community Theatre in Pomona, this group was organized in 1928 by Bess Adams Garner. The group consisted of approximately 30 members.

[5]Padua Hills was named for the Italian city of Padova, a famous university town, with an atmosphere similar to that of Claremont and its many colleges. The name Padua was also associated with the San Antonio Peak, which dominates the Sierra Madre mountain range and the valleys of this part of Southern California, because Anthony is the patron saint of Padua.

[6]Padua Hills continued as an exclusively Mexican theatre for more than 40 years, finally closing in 1974.

[7]David Streeter currently works in the special collection department of the Pomona Public Library. I gratefully acknowledge his help and his confidence in lending me the material available on Padua Hills.

[8]Charles A. Dickinson was director of the theatre for many years until his death in 1950. His association with Padua began when he was a graduate student in Claremont. He wrote most of the plays that were performed during the 1930s.

[9]The first of the organization's Articles of Incorporation stipulated the name of the corporation as the Padua Institute. In addition to the objectives noted in the text, the second article of incorporation stated that the institution was intended to establish, maintain, and

conduct an educational institution or school for the teaching of music, dramatics, arts, and crafts. These articles were endorsed and filed in the office of the Secretary of the State of California on December 30, 1935. The document was undersigned by H. H. Garner, Bess Adams Garner, Erlo V. Simon, Mary Nicholl Kerr and Robert J. Bernard. The trustees' copy of the articles of incorporation can be found in the Pomona Public Library.

[10]This quote is taken from one of the scrapbooks located at Padua Hills Theatre Collection at Pomona Public Library. This album was put together by Bess Adams Garner in the 1940s.

[11]These passages are verbatim quotes. The sometimes senseless language is a further indication of the lack of sensitivity toward the perception of the culture and people of Mexican descent.

[12]The French critic examines the work of Mexican American as well as Anglo American authors, demonstrating the former evolution from the *corrido*, with its subtle criticism of Anglos, to broader writings that address the loss of cultural identity. Rocard studies the changing image of the Mexican American over three periods: from the United States' annexation of the Southwest in 1848 to 1940; the "assimilationist" period from 1940 to 1965; and the explosive period of the Chicano movement, from 1965 to 1974.

[13] Rocard describes *Tortilla Flat* as the first book of real value devoted to Americans of Mexican origin.

[14]The term "obsession" and "fascinating aesthetics" are part of Jon Slott's description of Bess Garner's relationship with the Mexican Players. (10)

[15]The dramatic text was written by Emily Wardman Bell.

[16]Malinche was also known as Malintzín Tenepal and, later by her Spanish name, doña Marina.

[17]Luz María Garcés was a respected dancer and specialist on Mexican folklore. She taught songs and dances; designed costumes; and helped to write some of the plays. From January 19 to March 30, her play *Mi compadre Juan* was staged. Apparently, she also directed the songs and dances in *Cuadros de México viejo*. I found this information in the program notes in one of the scrapbooks of the collection. However, this play does not appear in the "Repertoire of the Mexican Players of Padua Hills," listed in Deuel's book.

[18]With the play *¿Idolos muertos?*, the *Jamaica* started to take place every summer at Padua Hills. This type of Mexican fair still takes place in some areas of Southern California. Also *jamaica* is a delicious fruit made from dried petals of the roselle plant imported from the island of Jamaica.

[19]The research of Marian Perales and Alicia Rodriguez reveals that World War II positively affected the women at Padua Hills since they began to occupy roles men traditionally held. Rodriguez and Perales are currently graduate students in the History Department at Claremont Graduate School.

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La representación de la mujer mexicana en los EE.UU. en las *Crónicas Diabólicas* de Jorge Ulica

I

La recopilación de *Crónicas Diabólicas* de Julio G. Arce (alias Jorge Ulica) debe de ser analizada y estudiada tomando en cuenta las características socio-históricas y culturales del momento de su aparición en los periódicos de California y del suroeste de los Estados Unidos alrededor de 1920. Los ensayos son muy diversos en cuanto se refiere a la temática pero sobresale el fenómeno de la aculturación de aquellas personas, especialmente las mujeres, recién inmigradas a los Estados Unidos.[1] Aparentemente, a primera vista resalta un tono humorístico; sin embargo, en una lectura más cuidadosa se puede notar que surgen contradicciones por parte del autor en cuanto a su posición política e ideológica.

Para el objeto del presente trabajo es importante aclarar que el enfoque primordial consiste en presentar la relación que existe entre las críticas observaciones de Ulica y las publicaciones de la prensa en ese momento. Ulica observa el conflicto cultural que las mujeres de origen mexicano atraviesan en el momento de situarse en un espacio desconocido y extranjero, los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, y como la prensa en su formato y redacciones contradecía y desvalorizaba los esfuerzos que las mujeres estaban logrando históricamente en ambos lados de la frontera. La importancia de esta colección reside en lo vívido de la descripción porque nos provee con una información concreta de una población en transición en la década de los años 1920. De ahí que el propósito de este ensayo es demostrar la perspectiva de una circunstancia socio-histórica, la existencia de una narrativa que muestra predominantemente la formación de una sociedad chicana y cómo las mujeres contribuyen a la construcción de ésta.[2]

Esta colección recopilada por Juan Rodríguez es importante, sobre todo, porque presenta las características y rasgos de una sociedad en transición desde la perspectiva de un mexicano autoexiliado durante la Revolución mexicana. Según Rodríguez en su introducción:

> [A]nte el peligro de perder su vida, Arce decide salir de México en el primer buque que se presente. "Por pura casualidad ese

> buque venía rumbo a San Francisco...fue pura coincidencia lo de San Francisco." (14)

Arce llega a San Francisco en 1915 y se encuentra ante una gran comunidad, la mayoría mexicanos. Después de intentar varios trabajos manuales, ve la posibilidad de continuar con su labor periodística que realizaba en México. Su capacidad y formación como periodista le proporciona la oportunidad de escribir estos pequeños ensayos o crónicas que se enfocan en la experiencia de convivir en la sociedad anglosajona. Esta experiencia es la transición que da raíz a lo que se considera como cultura chicana.

II

Es de suma importancia reconocer el gran influjo de los intelectuales que se exiliaron a los Estados Unidos a principios del siglo XX y cómo éstos contribuyeron a que los periódicos existentes adquirieran otro nivel de producción. Sin embargo, se debe notar que aunque ellos contribuyeron en la prensa o fundaron nuevos periódicos ya existían muchos periódicos en español[3]. Los periódicos tenían diferentes funciones. De acuerdo a Carlos E. Cortés, los periódicos en español comparten tres roles importantes en Estados Unidos:

> [A]s instruments to social control, as instruments of social activism, and as reflections of Chicano life. As instruments of social control, they have spread official government information about how Americans are supposed to act and have socialized Chicanos into the "American way of thinking." As instruments of social activism, they have protested against discrimination, pointed out the lack of public services for Mexican Americans, raised Chicano social consciousness, and exhorted Mexican Americans to take action. **As reflections of Chicano life, they have printed poetry, essays, letters, and other forms of Mexican-American expression.** (254; el énfasis es mío)

Hay que tomar en consideración que la orientación de cada periódico variaba de acuerdo al lugar de publicación, pero lo que más importa es que fue una avenida de expresión accesible y fiable para la preservación de un momento histórico. En el excelente trabajo de Herminio Ríos y Guadalupe Castillo que realizaron concentrándose en los estados de Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico y Texas, identificaron 372 periódicos en español o bilingües que estaban establecidos entre 1848 y 1940. Este resultado de Ríos y Castillo muestra la determinación de una población por mantener a la comunidad informada, de reportar las relaciones y de proveer un espacio de expresión.

III

El periódico, como antes he mencionado, fue la matriz donde se podía publicar y fue donde muchos intelectuales que se exiliaron en los Estados Unidos publicaban. Entre ellos se encuentra Julio G. Arce (Jorge Ulica), que se establece en California[4]. De acuerdo a Clara Lomas, Jorge Ulica proyecta una posición ambivalente:

> Ulica no toma una posición definida ante el conflicto cultural y político entre los dos grupos étnicos, ya que la "Crónica Diabólica" le permite mantenerse en este vaivén entre una postura de resistencia cultural y otra de apropiación ideológica. Como mexicano se burla de la aculturación del elemento mexicano. Sin embargo, como persona con intereses de clase media o alta, convenientemente acepta y se acomoda dentro de un plano individualista a lo que le ofrece la sociedad dominante.(48)

Sin embargo, también vacila en identificarse con sus compatriotas ya que como antes mencionado, él proviene de una clase social alta diferente a la que pertenecen la mayoría de inmigrantes mexicanos. Por la seguridad de pertenecer a una esfera social alta y de poseer una formación diferente, él se autoacredita el derecho de criticar mordazmente algunos de los aspectos de la cultura anglosajona y a los mexicanos que intentan adoptar parte de esa cultura y que en el proceso de aculturación fracasan. Aspectos de la sociedad anglosajona son: la obsesión competitiva en el fútbol, los bailes, el proceso electoral y muchos más. Sin embargo, él es más crítico con aquellas personas que no tienen éxito al aculturarse a este "nuevo" estado.

IV

A lo largo de sus columnas, Ulica generalmente sigue un patrón: presenta el problema, lo desarrolla y el final o resultado es fatal. Como antes he mencionado, la mujer es el personaje principal y como ella está en control de la situación, el problema no se resuelve debido a que ella es la que lo controla. El no proyecta una representación positiva de la mujer, ni siquiera reconoce el intento que ella hace para beneficiar o resolver la situación específica. Lo que Ulica revela es la imagen de la mujer fracasada porque carece de otras herramientas de defensa: ella no pertenece a la clase social alta, no tiene una educación formal, desconoce la lengua y, sobre todo, no posee una rígida norma de etiqueta. Por lo tanto, él apela a que mantenga sus tradiciones típicas y no se involucre en áreas que están generalmente destinadas al sexo masculino.

V

En este momento histórico, Ulica no era el único con esta actitud. También *La Prensa*, el periódico de más renombre en San Antonio, Texas, y, por supuesto, con el mayor número de lectores, insistía en que la mujer continuara con ese mismo

patrón tradicional de actividades:

> [N]ever encouraged the Mexican woman to seek professional careers or to attempt self-realization anywhere other than inside the home or in occupations that were stereotypically acceptable for the woman—teaching inside the home, of course, was one of these "acceptable jobs." (Lawhn 65)

Representando a la mujer de esa manera antifeminista, Ulica y los periódicos no reconocen los logros que la mujer mexicana había adquirido en noviembre de 1916 en el primer congreso feminista que tuvo lugar en Mérida, Yucatán. El movimiento y organización de La Liga Femenil Latino Americana surgió a raíz de que en los Estados Unidos las mujeres habían adquirido el derecho de votar en ocho estados en 1912[5]. Además, mientras en México se intensificaba el movimiento feminista, *La Prensa* continuaba publicando ensayos editoriales que no favorecían a la mujer, junto a ensayos que abogaban por el papel tradicional del hombre (Lawhn 67). Con esta politización y toma de conciencia masiva de las mujeres que estaba sucediendo en ambos lados de la frontera, cabe la posibilidad de que la manera en que Ulica presenta a las mujeres sólo fuese una reacción en contra del surgimiento de los derechos de la mujer.

VI

Las mujeres son las que más sufren de su mordaz crítica por ser ellas el centro, la base de la familia, las que mantienen la unión familiar y las que continúan con las tradiciones familiares y culturales. Por lo tanto, ellas son responsables de que las tradiciones familiares se vayan deteriorando. De acuerdo a Ulica, ella es la que intenta la incorporación en un espacio que rompe con los roles tradicionales de la mujer y no es una práctica apropiada para el género femenino. De ahí que Ulica se enfoca en las consecuencias negativas y no en los logros obtenidos. Para Ulica el hecho de que la madre sostenga a su hija sin la ayuda de un hombre no es admirable porque tiene que sacrificar su apariencia física y el aprendizaje del inglés:

> Pero sucedió que las estimables Pisarrecios (madre e hija) se habían dedicado, desde su llegada a estos mundos, a regentear un expendio de carnes... Así es que una y otra sólo sabían en aquello de "speak english," unas cuantas palabrejas y frases de uso muy común . . . (52)

Para Ulica, el hecho de que ellas, madre e hija, tenían que trabajar para sobrevivir, no es una justificación de no hablar bien el inglés. También Ulica considera que en el momento en el que la mujer adopta nuevas, fáciles y prácticas formas anglosajonas de cocinar, desintegra la armonía de la familia por el desastre que causa:

> Lo malo es que Lugardita ya no quiere guisar "mexican," como ella dice. Se ha enamorado de la cocina americana con un afecto profundo, y ahora hace "beefsteaks"... Hasta los frijoles refritos los guisa ahora al "american style". (116)

Para que esta familia no sufra desastres culinarios, Ulica sugiere que se le trate a él como compatriota y se le ofrezca comida típica mexicana a la que él está acostumbrado. No sólo la cocina es el espacio donde se enfoca Ulica sino que también en la personalidad de la mujer. El hecho de que ella se ve ante el deseo de seguir las nuevas modas de vestir tiene repercusiones negativas y bajas. Ella es también criticada por tener la opción de contestar a un anuncio por palabras en el periódico en el que un hombre busca esposa. Ulica representa esa relación como un desastre total donde ella es la culpable por romper con la forma tradicional de encontrar marido:

> Había puesto él un anuncio en los periódicos diciendo que deseaba cambiar "english for spanish," y como ella deseaba mejorar su "english," llamó al individuo aquel. Principió el intercambio de voces. Al principio eran voces dulces, armoniosas. Sólo se hablaba de "love" caricias, ternura, "lots of kisses," y otras lindezas. Hubo matrimonio y el estado del léxico fue siendo más enérgico hasta que se llegó a los "tales por los cuales" en "spanish" y a los "foolish," "son of a gun," y "black dogs" en "english." (25)

También ridiculiza a aquella que desea un hombre oloroso y aseado diferente a los de su propia raza:

> No me "miente" a Teódulo, lo dejé por prieto, por viejo y porque no tenía olor en los dientes como los "americans"... Cuando me divorcié, se aguantó; pero cuando me casé con "Jim," se enojó y me dijo que las piedras se encuentran rodando y que ya nos encontraría . . . y temo que me dé una garrotiza o se la dé a "Jimmy." (95)

Niega el derecho a que la mujer sea feliz por haberse divorciado de su esposo mexicano. Él no acepta que ella también tiene el derecho de escoger, por ejemplo, cuando ellas deciden celebrar su propio cumpleaños al estilo americano con una autocreada *surprise-party*: "Como se acerca el día del santo de la señora doña Lola Flores, ésta no quiso perder la oportunidad de ser agasajada y celebrada a la usanza de este país" (77). La fiesta sorpresa no les salió como la habían planeado por eso ellas están también sujetas a la burla punzante de Ulica por carecer de un buen conocimiento de la cultura. Utilizar sus nombres en inglés (por ejemplo, Lola

Flowers), no es suficiente, según Ulica, para que se las pueda considerar integradas en la cultura anglosajona.

VII

En la mayoría de cuadros donde la posición de los hombres se ve amenazada por la liberación de las mujeres, Ulica intenta prevenir a aquellos de que están en peligro. La postura del hombre tanto en el núcleo familiar como en el social corre riesgo. Por lo tanto, en la mayoría de los cuadros los hombres se solidarizan y concluyen que los Estados Unidos es un país donde los hombres están a punto de perder su voz y, sobre todo, su autoridad. En el cuadro "Arriba las faldas," Ulica siente compasión por el sufrimiento del hombre. Ulica atribuye el que las mujeres hayan perdido el respeto por haber adoptado ciertas formas de actuar de las mujeres anglosajonas:

> En este país hacen lo que les da su real gana. La mía, [la esposa] que era obediente tan fiel y mosquita muerta en Ojinaga, aquí se ha vuelto "de cohetería," no me hace caso . . . y cuando le reclamo me "hecha de la mama". (145)

Este es un ejemplo del poder que las mujeres tienen en este país y la pérdida de control por parte de los hombres en las mujeres. Ella ya no es la mujer subordinada y sumisa, ha adquirido ya una posición donde tiene el valor de cuestionar y decidir. A la vez parece que Ulica también quiere abogar por la preservación de ciertas tradiciones culturales mexicanas machistas porque entre estar sometidos a la mujer o al infierno, es mejor el infierno. Como antes he mencionado, esta selección de ensayos se enfoca principalmente en las mujeres, ellas son las principales protagonistas porque al criticarlas, Ulica está siguiendo las mismas pautas del momento histórico controlado por la perspectiva masculina. De ahí que concluyen que si los hombres casados quieren conservar su matrimonio en armonía no deben de cruzar el Río Bravo, espacio fronterizo que tiene connotaciones peligrosas:

> Porque aquí andan mal las cosas, muy mal y el género masculino va perdiendo, a pasos agigantados . . . Casos semejantes ocurren a diario, y nuestras lindas mujeres "de la Raza," mal llegan, cuando se enteran de que aquí mandan ellas y de que los maridos debemos ser mansos de corazón, cortos de palabras y quietos de manos. (90-91)

Ulica parece interceder por la preservación de valores masculinos: mujeriegos, agresivos y violentos. Estas son cualidades que según Ulica no se deben perder al cruzar la frontera.

El concepto de frontera en estos cuadros adquiere una característica importante y única porque es lo opuesto a lo que vemos en la literatura chicana más reciente[6].

En estos cuadros, según Ulica, el cruce del río, hacia los Estados Unidos, significa la deteriorización, ruptura o pérdida de "los buenos" valores tradicionales mexicanos. Ulica falla en reconocer el valor de este espacio. Según Francisco Lomelí, el concepto del espacio fronterizo: "[E]s el sitio donde se juntan dos culturas con diferencias bien marcadas, y a la vez donde más se parecen para posiblemente constituir una sola cultura" (24).

Ulica no entiende este concepto, porque para él era mejor que mantuvieran sus mismas tradiciones. Más adelante, Ulica aconseja al lector en "Ignacia y Megildo" que la liberación de la mujer no es buena para el hombre porque esto cambia la estructura patriarcal. Ulica sugiere que: "Y es mejor, por lo tanto, que los compatriotas casados que quieran venir a Yankilandia, dejen a sus mujercitas por allá en su tierra" (91-92). Cabe hacer hincapié que las mujeres son las culpables de que el estado armonioso que los hombres poseen sea alterado y en muchos casos interrumpido y hasta llegue a perderse. Por consiguiente, Ulica sugiere evitar introducirlas a este ambiente "corrupto" del otro lado de la frontera porque, inmediatamente, ellas quieren adoptar las costumbres anglosajonas:

> Aquí, el esposo duerme a los niños, los cambia de pañales, y los saca a paseo; lava la losa, tiende la ropa, va de compras con los chinos y al mercado: barre la casa, cambia sábanas, mata las pulgas y lava y plancha. De seguir así, no será raro que por métodos perfeccionados, tenga los hijos y los críe. (147)

Ulica, al momento de hacer mención de estos cambios en las mujeres, implica oposición a la adquisición de estas nuevas actitudes de la mujer. Este conjunto de actitudes implica la ruptura y pérdida del rol tradicional del hombre. El hombre es el ser privilegiado por naturaleza, es el ser activo versus la mujer que usualmente representa el rol pasivo. Por lo tanto, según Ulica, esta nueva identidad de la mujer mexicana en los Estados Unidos pone en peligro la condición y estado del hombre.

VIII

A pesar de que Julio G. Arce adopta una posición separatista porque mantiene su cultura casi inalterada, sus cuadros son importantes porque representan la vida cotidiana de la gente mexicana que inmigra hacia "el norte". Estos cuadros muestran un momento histórico de los pormenores de la aculturación de los mexicanos en los Estados Unidos en los años 1920. Esta recopilación es una representación de la sociedad en transición y por lo tanto también tiene el uso práctico de servir como semilla a lo que se considera como literatura chicana. Reitero un vez más que estas columnas *Crónicas Diabólicas* son importantes por el tratamiento del tema colectivo de un grupo en estado de aculturación. Esta colección responde como visión alternativa a lo que la literatura hegemónica presenta. Con el gran incremento de literaturas étnicas, textos con este tipo de temática que se considera "minor literature" constituyen una manifestación de lo que la literatura canónica ha

obscurecido, silenciado e ignorado a través de los años. De acuerdo a Rosaura Sánchez y Joseph Sommers, la literatura chicana es "[c]omo una de las formas culturales que ha servido al pueblo chicano, directa o indirectamente, como toma de conciencia de la realidad, como respuesta, a nivel individual o colectivo" (42).

Un aspecto más para agregar al papel importante de la literatura chicana es que sirve también para analizar y detectar la trayectoria de una población y restaurar a un nivel textual la representación de una realidad histórica: la existencia de un pueblo chicano en los Estados Unidos. La literatura chicana, de acuerdo a Lomelí, es similar a la definición de la literatura latinoamericana según Arturo Uslar Pietri:

> [N]ace mezclada e impura, e impura y mezclada alcanza sus más altas expresiones. No hay en su historia nada que se parezca a la ordenada sucesión de escuela; las tendencias y las épocas que caracteriza, por ejemplo, a la literatura francesa. En ella nada termina y nada está separado. Todo tiende a superponerse y a fundirse. Lo clásico con lo romántico, lo antiguo con lo moderno, lo popular con lo refinado, lo tradicional con lo mágico, lo tradicional con lo exótico. Su curso es como el de un río, que acumula y arrastra aguas, troncos, cuerpos y hojas de infinitas procedencias. Es aluvial. (10)

Es obvio que la literatura chicana ha tenido escasa diseminación en el pasado pero poco a poco se han estado rompiendo esas barreras estereotípicas.

IX

Julio G. Arce muere en 1926 en la ciudad de San Francisco y nunca regresa a su país natal. Muere desconociendo la herencia tan valiosa que nos dejó con la publicación de sus "Crónicas Diabólicas." Con el afán de ridiculizar a la mujer mexicana en transición, nos presenta el momento socio-histórico del momento y la formación de la concientización de la mujer chicana: la lucha, el sufrimiento, humillaciones, y degradaciones que tuvieron que pasar al intentar lograr un espacio y un reconocimiento como mujeres y no como objetos. Además las actividades de los personajes nos ofrecen una perspectiva múltiple de la realidad que va más allá de lo que la historia nos puede brindar.

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NOTAS

[1] La bibliografía de las *Crónicas Diabólicas* es muy limitada y ninguno de los artículos analiza el papel brillante de la mujer mexicana durante el proceso de aculturación. En cuanto a los artículos que analizan algunas crónicas donde la mujer es la protagonista, no ven, ni reconocen la lucha y la victoria de ella. Por lo tanto este artículo intenta abrir otra vertiente a esta colección.

[2] Es importante no ignorar otras obras seminales, por ejemplo *Las aventuras de don Chipote o Cuando los pericos mamen* de Daniel Venegas, novela publicada en 1928 en *El Heraldo de México* de Los Angeles, California. Estas contienen un sincretismo cultural, revelan la formación y estructura social y tratan de la problemática de aculturación. Estas obras poseen un estilo que abre las puertas a una temática nueva.

[3] El primer periódico que apareció en español fue en Nueva Orleans bajo el título de *El Misisipi* en 1808. Para mayor información consultar el artículo de Gutiérrez.

[4] Consultar el excelente artículo de Charles Tatum en el cual menciona a los más importantes escritores como Benjamín Padilla "Kaskabel".

[5] Ver el estudio de E.V. Niemeyer, Jr.

[6] En textos recientes de literatura chicana, el personaje cruza el río Bravo, o la "frontera" pero en sentido opuesto; de los EE. UU. hacia México, en busca de estrechar o reforzar más los lazos de identidad perdidos o ignorados con la tierra, México. Entre los escritores más predominantes se encuentran, por ejemplo, Cherríe Moraga, Oscar Zeta Acosta, Sandra Cisneros, Richard Rodriguez y Arturo Islas.

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Literatura fronteriza tejana: El compromiso con la historia en Américo Paredes, Rolando Hinojosa y Gloria Anzaldúa*

I

> La palabra *frontera* casi siempre se ve asociada a una situación histórica o cultural concreta. En España, frontera significó la lucha física entre moros y cristianos. Ese concepto de frontera se extendió a México y otros países de América.
>
> Luis Leal, *Aztlán y México*

La frontera tejana del Río Grande es una zona geográfica cuya fisonomía natural e historia le otorgaron sus propios hábitos y costumbres. Como en otras áreas de Hispanoamérica, en esta región fértil se llevó a cabo la colonización española. Con el tiempo, surgió una auténtica cultura hispanoamericana, la tejano-mexicana, la cual perdura hasta nuestra época contemporánea, aun después de que el Río Grande se convirtiera en una barrera, en un espacio de conflicto cultural y lingüístico. Sin embargo, no es hasta décadas recientes que ese pueblo, desconocido tanto para el mundo hispano como para el angloamericano, recupera su historia de desplazamiento y resistencia con la literatura que surge en el siglo XX. Quisiera trazar las huellas de las transformaciones histórico-culturales sufridas por el pueblo chicano-tejano, desde el siglo XVIII hasta la década de los ochenta, a través de tres autores del valle del Río Grande.

En otra ocasión terminé un ensayo sobre *Generaciones y semblanzas* (1977) concluyendo que, a partir de los primeros libros de su historia fragmentaria del condado mítico de Belken, en Tejas, Rolando Hinojosa quería afirmar el carácter colectivo de un grupo social formado en oposición a la dominación angloamericana y sin modificación hegemónica por la ideología individualista estadounidense ("Chronicle, Biography and Sketch"). Aunque sus personajes/narradores, Rafa

Buenrostro y Jehú Malacara, habían sufrido un proceso de "americanización"—me refiero a la educación primaria y secundaria en inglés, ejército en Corea y universidad en Austin—ellos seguían siendo mexicanos. A diferencia de otros libros del período contemporáneo chicano, en ningún momento de esta obra se desarrollaba la trama para cuestionar o buscar una identidad mexicana-chicana. O sea, según las circunstancias históricas, el conflicto de culturas en Tejas y el racismo institucionalizado contra el mexicano, estos personajes ya sabían quiénes eran. Me pareció, además, que las combinaciones de forma y contenido, de trama y caracterización, que Hinojosa logró con las formas narrativas de la estampa, la semblanza y el cronicón, y aun los títulos *Generaciones y semblanzas* y *Claros varones de Belken* confirmaban de una manera muy hispana, la supervivencia de esa cultura autóctona tejano-mexicana.

En esta ocasión quisiera retomar las brechas abandonadas en *Generaciones*, seguir unas nuevas en *Claros varones de Belken* (1986) y leer la obra de Hinojosa a la luz de la labor intelectual original de Américo Paredes y Gloria Anzaldúa. Si el escritor-folklorista Paredes en su estudio "*With His Pistol in His Hand*": *A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (1958) reconstruye el período épico guerrero a través de "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez", Hinojosa será el cronista de la época bajo dominación. Los primeros tres libros de Hinojosa, *Estampas del valle* (1973), *Generaciones* y *Claros varones*, escritos en español, son el cronicón del condado de Belken cuyo eje histórico es la desaparición de la cultura ranchera mexicana. En su libro autobiográfico *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa regresa a su cultura tejano-mexicana estudiando los mismos temas de Paredes e Hinojosa pero ahora acentuando el papel de la mujer del Tercer Mundo en el mundo contemporáneo de la frontera.

II

> The Lower Río Grande Border is the area lying along the river, from its mouth to the two Laredos. A map, especially one made some thirty or forty years ago, would show a clustering of towns and villages along both banks, with lonely gaps to the north and to the south. This was the heart of the old Spanish province of Nuevo Santander, colonized in 1749 by José de Escandón.
>
> Américo Paredes, "*With His Pistol in His Hand*"

En un discurso patrocinado por la Hispanic Society of America, en la Universidad de Columbia, Nueva York, en abril de 1909, el erudito español Ramón Menéndez Pidal lamentó el hecho de que el romance español no hubiera encontrado terreno fértil en el Nuevo Mundo (50-51). Aunque las grandes hazañas históricas de descubrimiento y conquista habían ocurrido durante la popularidad del romancero español, el siglo XVI ya no era un período creativo para esta canción popular. No

sabía Menéndez Pidal que unos cuantos meses después de su discurso empezaría, con la actividad política de Francisco I. Madero, un período heroico que daría a luz el corrido de la Revolución Mexicana, y tampoco sabía que el corrido mexicano, este romance americano, era a su vez retoño de una tradición floreciente a lo largo de las dos riberas del Río Grande desde mediados del siglo XIX. Fue la labor de Américo Paredes en su *"With His Pistol in His Hand"* que rescató el corrido fronterizo del abandono para su estudio dentro del mundo académico angloamericano. Y para explicar este fenómeno artístico, Paredes se vio obligado a dirigir su genio creativo hacia el pasado y reconstruir la cultura ranchera de la provincia española de Nuevo Santander, e, irónicamente, recibió apoyo en este esfuerzo por situar el corrido dentro de su contexto cultural de estudios españoles, especialmente, de los estudios culturales y literarios de Menéndez Pidal.

Américo Paredes es, tal vez, la figura más importante de los estudios culturales chicanos. Nació en la frontera, en Brownsville en 1915, fecha importante que marca la última rebelión armada de méxico-tejanos contra angloamericanos. En una entrevista personal, Paredes me explicó que podía trazar su linaje en el norte de México, en el estado de Tamaulipas, desde 1580 con el adelantado Carbajal y a lo largo del Río Bravo en Camargo y Mier desde la colonización de Nuevo Santander con José de Escandón en 1749.[1] Se educó en ambos lados de la frontera, asistiendo a escuelas en Brownsville—escuela primaria y secundaria y Brownsville Junior College en 1936—y veraneando con familiares en ranchos mexicanos cerca de Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Gran lector de sus dos tradiciones literarias, la angloamericana y la latinoamericana, siempre había deseado seguir una carrera en las letras, ser escritor y, tal vez, profesor en la Universidad de Tejas, Austin. Pero en esa época sólo llegó a terminar dos años en Brownsville Junior College aunque sí inició una carrera de escritor y periodista escribiendo para el *Brownsville Herald*, *La Prensa* de San Antonio y *El Regional* de Matamoros. Durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial sirvió en el Pacífico en el ejército de los Estados Unidos como periodista para el *Stars and Stripes* de las fuerzas armadas. Un evento que contribuyó a su tesis doctoral "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez: A Ballad of Border Conflict" fue su reportaje de los procesos judiciales contra los japoneses.[2] Su tesis debe leerse como un examen judicial de una causa criminal para pronunciar sentencia. Como me indicó en nuestra entrevista, "I wanted to prepare a brief on behalf of my people." Así, su tesis publicada en 1958 con el título *"With His Pistol in His Hand"* es un análisis de la propaganda anglo-tejana—el racismo institucionalizado por el historiador Walter Prescott Webb y el folkorista J. Frank Dobie—como justificación de la guerra imperialista contra México y méxico-tejanos.[3]

Desde 1958 ha tenido una carrera distinguida como investigador y profesor en los departamentos de Antropología e Inglés en la Universidad de Tejas, Austin. En Austin, estableció los Archivos de Folklore, el Programa en Folklore y el Centro de Estudios México-Americanos. Recientemente jubilado, ha recibido numerosos elogios. En 1989, al inaugurarse el prestigioso Charles Frankel Prize de la National Endowment for the Humanities otorgado por "lifelong achievement in the Humani-

ties", Paredes fue uno de cinco que recibió este honor. Y en 1991, Paredes, Julián Samora y César Chávez fueron los primeros méxico-americanos a recibir la Orden del Aguila Azteca, el máximo honor de la República Mexicana, por sus esfuerzos por los derechos humanos de mexicanos y por la preservación de la cultura mexicana en los Estados Unidos.

Después de "*With His Pistol in His Hand*", Paredes tradujo, editó y publicó más de noventa reseñas, artículos y libros sobre el folklore hispanoamericano y la cultura mexicana en los Estados Unidos. Entre sus publicaciones más significativas se encuentran: "El folklore de los grupos de origen mexicano en los Estados Unidos" (1964), "Divergencias en el concepto del folklore y el contexto cultural" (1967), "Folk Medicine and the Intercultural Jest" (1968), *Folktales of Mexico* (1970), *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (1972), *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (1976), "On Ethnographic Work among Minority Groups: A Folklorist's Perspective" (1977) y *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border* (1993). Y como hemos descubierto recientemente también fue uno de los primeros escritores chicanos. Su novela *George Washington Gómez: A Mexico-Texan Novel* escrita entre 1935 y 1940 fue publicada en 1990 y una colección de poesía, *Between Two Worlds*, con poemas fechados cuando Paredes todavía estaba en la escuela secundaria fue publicada en 1991.[4] Además, dos colecciones de cuentos, *Uncle Remus con chile* (1993) y *The Hammon and the Beans and Other Stories* (1994), acaban de publicarse. Todo su trabajo demuestra una madurez intelectual y política desde sus poemas en inglés en verso vanguardista como "Guitarreros" de 1935 (*Between Two Worlds* 29) y sonetos en español como "A César Augusto Sandino" de 1939 (*Between Two Worlds* 53) que escribió en solidaridad con el movimiento de liberación nicaragüense hasta sus ensayos más recientes sobre folkore fronterizo. Si comparamos su producción con la tradición latinoamericana, Paredes escribe una novela y publica poesía con temática semejante a sus contemporáneos Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo y Nicolás Guillén, luego sus estudios del folklore en los primeros años de la década de los cincuenta que culmina con "*With His Pistol in His Hand*" son semejantes a la ficción de Juan Rulfo y anticipadores del "Boom" en la medida que Paredes recupera la tradición oral para compararla con el registro oficial y analiza el colonialismo en las Américas, y en la década de los noventa publica estudios folklóricos que bien caben dentro de una postmodernidad americana. Paredes ha tenido una carrera extraordinaria que abarca casi todo el siglo XX.

Es difícil describir "*With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Es híbrido, borrando las fronteras entre disciplinas: es parte antropología, folklore, historia y ficción. Aunque es el resultado de un estudio académico, una tesis doctoral presentada en 1956 al Departamento de Inglés en la Universidad de Tejas, Austin, los lectores quedarán asombrados por la auto-reflexividad de su forma. Como el subtítulo anuncia, el libro es un estudio de un corrido y su héroe. Para cumplir este propósito, Paredes escribió una Segunda Parte, "*El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez*, a Ballad of Border Conflict", identificando variantes y estableciendo

una teoría de génesis y decadencia para el corrido fronterizo. Sin embargo, esta sección sirve de complemento académico a las secciones polémicas y narrativas de la Primera Parte, "Gregorio Cortez, the Legend and the Life", en la cual Paredes reconstruye el mundo histórico-social de Gregorio Cortez.

El primer capítulo del libro, "The Country", es un recuento de la colonización española por José de Escandón en 1749 y una reconstrucción de la organización de vida social que surgió a lo largo del estrecho fértil del río en aislamiento de los gobiernos de México y de los Estados Unidos. Hacia 1755, los pueblos de Laredo, Guerrero, Mier, Camargo y Reynosa habían sido organizados en las dos riberas del Río Grande; don Blas de María Falcón, el fundador de Camargo, había establecido el rancho de la Petronila en la desembocadura del Río Nueces, hoy cerca de la ciudad de Corpus Christi. Para 1835, unos tres millones de ganado se encontraban en la zona Río Grande-Nueces. Según Paredes, si el expansionismo anglo-tejano no hubiera alcanzado los pueblos del Río Grande, una autóctona cultura mestiza hispanoamericana hubiera continuado desarrollándose, organizada en su base económica por el rancho y al nivel ideológico por los ideales hispanos de la caballería. A diferencia de otras empresas colonizadoras españolas en California y Nuevo México basadas en las instituciones del presidio, la misión y la encomienda, en el valle del Río Grande, las entidades económicas importantes eran el rancho y el pueblo rural y la estructura social era la familia o el clan. Con sucesivas generaciones, los ranchos llegaron a formar feudos hereditarios, parcelas distribuidas entre los descendientes del dueño original. En estas áreas rurales, el padre o el primogénito era la suma autoridad, ejerciendo más poder que el estado o la iglesia. La obediencia al padre o al hermano mayor dependía de tradición y educación. Estas características familiares fortalecieron las comunidades, convirtiéndolas en entidades auto-suficientes, estimulando faenas y diversiones comunitarias y reduciendo al mínimo la intervención del gringo del norte o del fuereño del sur. Esta cultura ranchera mexicana, aclara Paredes, es el origen de los mitos culturales del *American West* y del *American cowboy*; las innovaciones tecnológicas que la cultura angloamericana contribuyó en el sur de Tejas fueron el revólver, el alambre de púas y los abogados (*Folklore and Culture* 20).

Es obvio que esta visión particular de la cultura ranchera tejana de Paredes es semejante a otros patriarcados rurales que se establecieron en otras zonas hispanoamericanas, todos productos de las fuerzas históricas de descubrimiento, conquista y colonización. Es este patriarcado ranchero con sus características feudales españolas que Rolando Hinojosa tomará como base de su mundo ficticio en *Generaciones* y *Claros varones* en el período chicano.

Según Paredes, hacia 1835 la vieja provincia de Nuevo Santander contaba con unos cien años de aislamiento y prosperidad cuando la guerra en Tejas empezó un período de lucha armada. La República de Tejas se formó en 1836 debido a la rebelión angloamericana y las guerras civiles de la joven nación mexicana. Los pueblos a lo largo del Río Grande se mantuvieron mexicanos ya que el Río Nueces al norte formaba la frontera entre Tejas y México. Pero la paz duró sólo una década

hasta 1846. Desde su origen cerca de Taos y Santa Fe, Nuevo México, hasta su desembocadura en el Golfo de México, el Río Grande con su puerto de Brazos Santiago en la ribera norte ofrecía a angloamericanos una oportunidad para controlar la economía del norte de México. Después de la guerra de los Estados Unidos contra México, con el tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo en 1848, el río dejó de ser un punto de enlace entre las dos riberas, convirtiéndose en una zona de conflicto y resistencia, separando el futuro Brownsville (Brazos Santiago) en el norte de Matamoros, Tamaulipas en el sur. En 1958 a la edad de 41 años, Paredes escribe francamente lo que no pudo publicar en su adolescencia: "[a] restless and acquisitive people, exercising the rights of conquest, disturbed the old ways" (15). Si tomamos en cuenta que la fecha de 1492 marca el inicio del expansionismo español en América, de igual importancia para el pueblo chicano es el año de 1836 que señala el comienzo del expansionismo angloamericano en Hispanoamérica, conflicto que perdura hasta nuestros días, creando las relaciones políticas y económicas entre Primer y Tercer Mundo a lo largo del mundo fronterizo contemporáneo, el cual Gloria Anzaldúa enfocará en la década de los ochenta. Como bien señala Paredes, hacia mediados del siglo XIX, la comunidad mexicana de Tejas, de pronto, se encontraba en la encrucijada de dos historias y dos culturas.

De esta sociedad surgieron héroes populares cuyas hazañas se cantaban en corridos. El Capítulo 2 de esta Primera Parte presenta la leyenda de un héroe, Gregorio Cortez, quien en 1901 mató a un cherife anglo-tejano defendiendo su derecho con su pistola en la mano. En este capítulo imaginativo, "The Legend," el antropólogo-historiador Paredes desaparece, dejando que la voz anónima del pueblo en tercera personal plural, "*they*", hable por él, y reconstruyendo las acciones heroicas de Cortez en breves estampas. Situando su recuento de noche, cuando los hombres se reunen para contar la leyenda y cantar el corrido en la cantina o el rancho, el erudito Paredes asume la postura de un narrador al servicio de los intereses de su comunidad. A diferencia de Aurelio M. Espinosa, el influyente hispanista méxico-americano de las primeras décadas del siglo XX, Paredes no quiso presentar el folklore de su grupo social como si fuera un objeto de museo, un vestigio de la grandeza española en el suroeste, la edad de oro de "*old Spain in our Southwest*" inventada por los anglos. Su estrategia narrativa, matizada con choteo mexicano dirigido a los anglos, le permite establecer la importancia política de Cortez, quien asume en la imaginación colectiva la expresión de la justicia. Cortez es el ranchero pacífico que se convierte en figura heroica porque como dice el corrido "la defensa es permetida". En el siguiente capítulo, "The Man", Paredes asume la postura de biógrafo narrando la vida de Cortez durante los años de 1901 a 1905, separando los hechos de la leyenda, por medio de testigos, periódicos y documentos de los cinco procesos legales contra Cortez (hechos llevados a la pantalla en la película, *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* de 1983).

Otros héroes precedieron y siguieron a Cortez: Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, el dueño del Rancho del Carmen cerca de Brownsville, quien en 1859 fue líder de la primera rebelión mexicana en contra de las autoridades angloamericanos; Catarino

Garza de Brownsville-Matamoros quien, en 1890, fue tal vez el primero a levantarse en contra de Porfirio Díaz; y Aniceto Pizaña de los "sediciosos" cuyas hazañas en 1915 ocasionaron conflicto armado entre mexicanos y rinches (los *Texas Rangers*). Según Paredes, este período de conflicto fronterizo terminó con la desaparición de la cultura ranchera cuando ambos lados de la frontera dejaron de concebirse como un mundo aparte. Hacia 1930 en México, la presidencia de Lázaro Cárdenas acabó con los feudos hereditarios y hacia 1940 en Tejas el modo de producción de la región fue transformado de la ranchería agropecuaria a la empresa agrícola capitalista. La fisonomía de la tierra cambió convirtiéndose, primero, en grandes expansiones algodoneras y, luego, en plantaciones de naranjos y toronjos.

En la Segunda Parte de su estudio, el folklorista Paredes teoriza un siglo de corridos fronterizos, desde 1836 hacia la década de los treinta del siglo XX. Hacia mediados del siglo XIX, las formas artísticas españolas, el romance, la décima, y la copla o verso, debieron convertirse en el corrido fronterizo. La tradición española se desarrolló hacia una forma predominante, el corrido, hacia un tema, el conflicto fronterizo, hacia un concepto del héroe, el valiente que lucha por sus derechos con su pistola en la mano. Y "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez", en particular, cantado por primera vez por guitarreros hacia 1901 sirvió la función de la épica medieval, el cumplimiento de los deseos de la comunidad expresados por su héroe injustamente culpado por las autoridades anglo-tejanas. Paredes hace hincapié en los paralelos entre la ranchería tejano-mexicana y el Medioevo europeo. Como las sociedades medievales, el valle del Río Grande se componía de pequeñas entidades sociales aisladas de las corrientes históricas modernas, donde florecía como en la España medieval un espíritu democrático del pueblo, donde se mantenía por la oralidad narraciones tradicionales hispanas. Cito el resumen de Paredes:

> Here is balladry, resembling in many aspects that of medieval Europe, which developed partly in the twentieth century, ... Though it flourished independently of newspapers and other written material, it existed side by side with them, allowing many opportunites for a comparison of written records and oral tradition... Gregorio Cortez and the ballad tradition it represents offer some living evidence concerning points that have been discussed by scholars in relation to the balladries of the past. One sees the effect of social conditions in the development of the balladry of the Lower Border. A type of society similar to that of the European folk groups of the Middle Ages produced a balladry similar to that of medieval Europe. The importance of border conflict in the development of heroic balladry is also illustrated. (244-45)

La homogeneidad cultural, el aislamiento y el patriarcado hicieron posible la existencia de la tradición oral del corrido. Así como los romances fronterizos

españoles surgieron de las guerras entre moros y cristianos, el conflicto entre culturas en el Río Grande dio a luz el corrido fronterizo de Gregorio Cortez.

Ahora bien, esta transcripción de la oralidad, como observa Ramón Saldívar, puede concebirse fundadora de una tradición tejano-mexicana: "Dr. Paredes's study of the corridos, the border ballads, concerning Gregorio Cortez may be said to have invented the very possibility of a narrative community, a complete and legitimate Texas-Mexican *persona*, whose life of struggle and discord was worthy of being told" ("Form of Texas-Mexican Fiction" 139). Sin duda, en el futuro, este estudio heterogéneo asumirá igual importancia para la tradición literaria tejano-mexicana como el *Facundo* de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento para la literatura hispanoamericana o *La España del Cid* de Menéndez Pidal para España. Como Sarmiento, Paredes estudia la organización social que se formó dentro de la naturaleza americana e inventa una figura con proporciones nacionales para combatir el enemigo político. El título de la obra es combativo, "con su pistola en la mano"; aunque tomado de una frase formulaica del corrido fronterizo, también iba dirigido al historiador racista Walter Prescott Webb quien había contribuido a la imagen negativa del mexicano y creado la leyenda gloriosa de los Texas Rangers en su *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (1935), libro escrito originalmente como una tesis de maestría.[5] Y como Menéndez Pidal, Paredes escribe un estudio académico de la tradición oral, separando historia de leyenda para crear un héroe nacional.

Señalando futuros caminos para autores chicanos, el libro de Paredes también es una síntesis de dos tradiciones. Según la bibliografía presentada en su libro, leyó estudios de antropología, folklore e historia necesarios para una tesis doctoral de la década de los cincuenta en un departamento de inglés: *Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest* (1952) de J. Frank Dobie; *The Texas Rangers in the Mexican War* (1920), *The Great Plains* (1931) y *The Texas Rangers* (1935) de Walter Prescott Webb; *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (1938) de John y Alan Lomax; *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1932-33) y *The Folktale* (1946) de Stith Thompson; y *The Golden Bough* (1951) de Sir James Frazier. Pero Paredes también consultó los estudios de hispanistas: *Romancero general* (1851-54) de Agustín Durán; *Romancero nuevomejicano* (1915-17) y *El romancero español* (1931) de Aurelio M. Espinosa; *El romance español y el corrido mexicano* (1939), *La décima en México* (1947) y *El corrido mexicano* (1954) de Vicente T. Mendoza, *The Spanish Folksong in the Southwest* (1933) de Arthur L. Campa; *European Balladry* (1939) de William James Entwistle; *De la poesía heroico-popular castellana* (1896) de Manuel Milá y Fontanals; y *Poesía popular y poesía tradicional en la literatura española* (1922), *Poesía juglaresca y juglares* (1924) y *Flor nueva de romances viejos* (1938) de Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Los temas importantes del libro fueron elaborados también del enorme caudal de estudios sobre la poesía heroico-popular castellana y el corrido mexicano. Y para ser más precisos, el concepto de la frontera que Paredes presenta, no "*the American frontier*", una naturaleza virgen disponible para la colonización angloamericana, sino "*the border*", una zona de conflicto y

mestizaje de culturas, no dista mucho del mismo en España e Hispanoamérica.

III

> Serious writing is deliberate as well as a consequence of an arrived-to decision; what one does with it may be of value or not, but I believe that one's fidelity to history is the first step to fixing a sense of place, whether that place is a world-wide arena or corner of it, as is mine.
>
> Rolando Hinojosa, "The Sense of Place"

Aunque el primer libro de Rolando Hinojosa, *Estampas del valle y otras obras* (1973), se interpretó por críticos como si fuera un costumbrismo hispanoamericano del siglo XIX, ahora, debemos leer sus obras a la luz de la narrativa del siglo XX.[6] En su segundo libro, *Generaciones y semblanzas* (1977), Hinojosa demostró que como Faulkner, Onetti, Rulfo o García Márquez, él también inventaba de una manera novedosa una vasta historia de una región y de un pueblo. El jurado que le otorgó el Premio Casa de las Américas a este libro en 1976 notó no sólo su "calidad de prosa: hábil manejo de diálogos, vigor descriptivo, riqueza de imágenes, excelente dominio de formas dialectales" sino también su "técnica novedosa, exteriorizada en el manejo del tiempo; estructura fundada en un collage de historias convergentes".[7] Las muchas tramas fragmentarias de sus nueve libros publicados forman un mosaico imaginativo en el cual los lectores se ven obligados a intercalar cada estampa dentro de un tiempo lineal, y sólo con la perspectiva adquirida de una lectura global podemos apreciar su obra entera como el "cronicón del condado de Belken".

El mundo fragmentario de Hinojosa guarda estrecha relación con la historia de Tejas y la zona fronteriza. El condado mítico de Belken con su sede en Klail City se compone de pueblos mayormente mexicanos, Flora y Relámpago, y angloamericanos, Bascom, Ruffing y Edgerton. Sus personajes pueblan un área colonizada por las cuatro familias fundadoras, los Vilches, Campoy, Farías y Buenrostro. El pueblo méxico-tejano de Relámpago tiene un significado especial; allí se encuentra el rancho del Carmen donde la familia Buenrostro ha vivido desde la época de Escandón. Con el rancho del Carmen, Hinojosa recuerda la historia de resistencia: éste es el mismo nombre del rancho de Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, líder de la primera rebelión mexicana en Tejas; también "En el condado del Carmen" es el primer verso de una de las versiones de "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez". Contra los Buenrostro, Hinojosa inventa la alianza capitalista de las familias Klail-Blanchard-Cooke que es reminisciente de la familia King-Kleberg que se apoderó de una gran extensión de terreno cerca del Río Nueces (ahora en Kleberg County), primero con Richard King entre 1850-80 y luego con su yerno Robert Kleberg entre 1920-30. Al morir Richard King en 1885, el King Ranch contaba con 500.000 acres;

al morir Robert Kleberg en 1932, el King Ranch había aumentado a 1.250.000 acres (Montejano 64). En 1854, King obtuvo 10.770 acres por $200 de un Pedro Hinojosa (Montejano 65).

Así, en el período contemporáneo chicano que empieza hacia 1965 con el Movimiento Chicano, Hinojosa seguirá los pasos de Paredes, regresando a sus orígenes en el valle del Río Grande.[8] Como Paredes, Hinojosa cuenta con un linaje que se remonta hacia la época colonial. Hinojosa nació en Mercedes, Tejas en 1929. Su padre, Manuel Guzmán Hinojosa, nació en 1883 en el rancho Campacuás al norte de Mercedes, así como otras dos generaciones de familiares. Hinojosa escribe:

> For me and mine, history began in 1749 when the first colonists began moving into the southern and northern banks of the Río Grande. That river was not yet a jurisdictional barrier and was not to be until almost one hundred years later; but, by then, the border had its own history, its own culture, and its own sense of place: it was Nuevo Santander, named for old Santander in the Spanish Peninsula. ("Sense of Place" 19)

En sus libros, Hinojosa enfocará el pasado hispano ranchero en el momento de transición con el cual termina el recuento de Paredes, cuando una generación de varones, nacida en el siglo XIX, desaparece, y otra del siglo XX, será desplazada de sus tierras patriarcales. Aunque todavía existen las familias desde los tiempos de Escandón, como los Buenrostro y los Villalón, el valle sufrirá cambios debido al modo de producción, conflictos regionales entre mexicanos y rinches, y conflictos internacionales, la Segunda Guerra Mundial y la guerra en Corea. Bajo la dominación angloamericana, los viejos recordarán el pasado con nostalgia como una época clásica. Así dice don Aureliano Mora al cherife del barrio mexicano de Klail City don Manuel Guzmán en *Generaciones*: "...somos griegos don Manuel ... los esclavos en casa de los romanos ..." (149) Como otros jóvenes después de servir en el ejército angloamericano en Corea, Rafa Buenrostro regresará (en *Claros varones*) a Tejas, al rancho del Carmen pero sólo de visita. Y el presente inseguro de los narradores Jehú Malacara y Rafa Buenrostro—marcado por las muertes de viejos revolucionarios o de jóvenes en guerra, algunos a manos de los rinches o en los campos de batalla—dará título a la obra entera de Hinojosa, la *Klail City Death Trip Series*.

Sin embargo, no es hasta *Claros varones* (1986) con los epígrafes y las fechas que inician este libro que se esclarecen los límites históricos de lo que podríamos llamar el primer ciclo del condado de Belken en los libros *Estampas* (1973), *Generaciones* (1977) y *Korean Love Songs* (1978). Como indica el primer epígrafe—"Aquí empieza lo nuestro; claven esas estacas," de Andrés Buenrostro Rincón (1729-1801)—los orígenes del linaje de los Buenrostro datan del siglo XVIII con la colonización de Tejas. La muerte de don Jesús Buenrostro (1883-1946), el patriarca del rancho del Carmen, recordada por los personajes de *Generaciones* y

finalmente fechada en *Claros varones* en el año 1946 marca, recordando las observaciones de Paredes, la desaparición de un modo de producción y un estilo de vida.

En el período de decadencia de la cultura ranchera, de dominación y resistencia cultural, don Jesús será la contrapartida del héroe Gregorio Cortez. El callará y vivirá una vida pacífica atendiéndose a lo suyo. Con referencia al tipo de heroísmo en este período, Hinojosa escribe en el prólogo a *Generaciones*:

> Aquí no hay héroes de leyenda ... El que busque héroes de la proporción del Cid, pongamos por caso, que se vaya a la laguna de la leche.
> Verdad es que hay distintos modos de ser heroico. Jalar día tras día y de aguantar a cuánto zonzo le caiga a uno enfrente no es cosa de risa. Entiéndase bien: el aguante tampoco es cerrar los ojos y hacerse pendejo.
> La gente sospecha que el vivir es algo heroico en sí. (1)

Aunque no es un guerrero de proporciones épicas, don Jesús, resiste y defiende sus derechos contra los esfuerzos de los Leguizamón, los Klail-Blanchard-Cooke y los rinches por apoderarse de los ranchos del valle. Los incidentes asociados con su muerte a manos de los Leguizamón serán repetidos de varias perspectivas en los libros de Hinojosa. Así, él es una figura axial porque su muerte enlaza formal e históricamente la trama del cronicón de Belken County.

Digo cronicón por dos razones: 1) porque ésta es la palabra que utilizan los escritores Jehú Malacara en *Generaciones* (169), P. Galindo en *Mi querido Rafa* de 1981 (8) y el narrador en *Claros varones* (15) y 2) por los títulos que ha escogido Hinojosa, *Generaciones y semblanzas* y *Claros varones de Belken*. La representación de don Jesús tiene obvios puntos de contacto con la historiografía española del período de transición del Medioevo al Renacimiento, con las obras *Generaciones y semblanzas* (1450) de Fernán Pérez de Guzmán y *Claros varones de Castilla* (1489) de Fernando del Pulgar. Ambos autores son cronistas de un mundo de feudos y de familias patriarcales en el cual la caballería sigue siendo importante, pero es un mundo en transición, contrastando una vieja ética guerrera con un concepto de la hombría basado en la fama y la vida virtuosa. Como primero indicó Plutarco en sus *Vidas paralelas*, por medio de las formas biográficas de la estampa y la semblanza, basadas en analogía con la pintura, se podría representar personajes históricos, genealogías de figuras ilustres. E Hinojosa siguiendo estos modelos, será el retratista de los rancheros del Río Grande, de claros varones, hombres rectos y cabales.

En *Generaciones*, a través de don Jesús Buenrostro, el quieto, hombre que merece fama popular por su rectitud, Hinojosa logrará sutilmente una reconstrucción de la historia del valle del Río Grande. Así narra el anciano Esteban Echevarría en la cantina *El Oasis*, en las primeras páginas:

> Una noche de abril cuando las flores de los naranjos querían reventar a pesar de la sequía, alguien viene y mata a don Jesús Buenrostro mientras duerme (esto tú ya lo sabes, Rafa). El matón es sorprendido mientras trata de quemar la carpa y a don Jesús y se huye al oír el trote de un caballo. El que viene es Julián, hermano menor de don Jesús el que, sin media palabra, recoge el cuerpo y lo monta atravesado sobre su propio caballo y se va andando rumbo a la casa de su hermano para depositarlo al pie de aquel nogalón que todavía está allí como testigo ... (21)

El incidente sirve para dar testimonio al conflicto entre los viejos rancheros contra los Leguizamón, gente advenediza, y su complicidad con los angloamericanos y los rinches, por apoderarse de los terrenos del valle. Don Julián cruzará el río y en México matará a los asesinos de su hermano, y después también a don Alejandro Leguizamón. A la misma vez, Hinojosa alude al cambio que se estaba llevando a cabo en el valle. El mundo patriarcal basado en la ranchería está por desaparecer. El año, según sabemos unos nueve años después en *Claros varones*, es 1946. La referencia al ciclo del mundo natural, "una noche de abril cuando las flores de los naranjos querían reventar", que se repetirá en varias ocasiones al recordar la muerte de don Jesús, apunta al cambio ya en gestación, del rancho agropecuario a la empresa capitalista. Esta frase tiene su eco, su proyección ulterior en *Generaciones*, cuando Josefa Guzmán escribe el 11 de abril de 1920 a su esposo, Manuel, en el campo de batalla en la Revolución Mexicana que "la cosecha de algodón será bien poca. Vamos llegando a los principios de mayo y los capullos apenas van creciendo—si es que crezcan y lleguen a reventar." (85) En la misma carta escribe: "Por aquí cayeron unos bolillos diciendo que van a sembrar naranjos y toronjos. Les dije que así volvieras del otro lado que hablaran contigo." (85) En otra época don Manuel Guzmán ya no vivirá de su rancho. Para completar la lógica histórica latente del valle del Río Grande—que se convertirá en la década de los treinta, como el valle de San Joaquín y el Imperial de California, en zona de explotación del trabajador mexicano—lectores de *Generaciones* sólo necesitan saltar una página al mundo de la década de los sesenta, y escuchar las voces anónimas del campesinado migratorio:

> Estamos en el mes de agosto en el condado de Belken y la pizca de algodón se está acabando. Las naranjas y las toronjas no estarán listas hasta diciembre. Estas se estiran de los árboles desde diciembre hasta marzo y, si hay suerte y no hiela, hasta abril. Pero, por lo que toca de agosto a diciembre, la cosa se pone tan pelona como una calavera a no ser que...
> ¿Qué? ¿Salimos pá Indiana como anuncia el Güero Cáscara o nos quedamos a mondonguear hasta diciembre. (87)

Hinojosa, a través de sus narradores y las estampas fragmentarias, logra esta reconstrucción de varias etapas históricas con sus ilaciones sociales, económicas y políticas, precisamente porque ya ha pasado. Queda claro este hecho en la última sección de *Generaciones*, cuando Enedino Broca, locutor de la KNFB, dedica una pieza a las chalequeras de la Suggs Clothing Manufacturing Company, primera industria de Klail. (155)

IV

> The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture.
>
> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Gloria Anzaldúa merece elogios por su revitalización creativa y crítica de la literatura fronteriza chicana. Como otras escritoras chicanas recibió sustento creativo de la historia de rebelión y resistencia feminista. "My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistence," escribe ella en *Borderlands* (21). Ganó su primera fama fuera de la problemática patriarcal tradicional del Movimiento Chicano en asociaciones feministas-lesbianas en el este de los Estados Unidos, y debe ser acreditada con la promoción de una perspectiva crítica tanto feminista como tercermundista con su coedición (con Cherríe Moraga) en 1981 de *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (versión en español, *Esta puente mi espalda: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos)*. Con esta antología testimonial—que reune contribuciones de mujeres afroamericanas, asiáticas, chicanas, cubanas, indígenas norteamericanas y puertorriqueñas—Moraga y Anzaldúa querían afirmar que el movimiento feminista angloamericano, tan limitado en su problemática, evitaba cuestiones de raza y clase. Las múltiples opresiones vividas por mujeres de color separaban a estas intelectuales de sus hermanas blancas y las unía de nuevo no sólo con chicanas sino también con mujeres al sur de la frontera. Así, esta literatura estadounidense es semejante en cuanto a problemática de sexualidad, raza y clase a la más reciente literatura testimonial del post-"Boom" hispanoamericano.[9] Me refiero a obras como *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983) de Rigoberta Menchú *y Aquí también (1984)* de Domitila Barrios de Chungara.

En su testimonio de "*coming out*" a su cultura, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa regresa a Hargill en el valle del Río Grande, al origen de su subordinación como chicana, mujer y lesbiana. Ella ofrece una visión histórica y metafórica de la frontera para derribar barreras y forjar puentes políticos (dedica su libro a mexicanos de ambos lados de la frontera). Según Anzaldúa, las fronteras se establecen para proteger lo nuestro del peligro, de lo ajeno, porque las fronteras

también son lugares donde habita lo prohibido. Para los angloamericanos en poder, los que habitan los fronteras son los chicanos, negros, indígenas, mulatos, mestizos, mojados, homosexuales y lesbianas, o todos aquellos que son "ilegítimos". En suma, las fronteras son los espacios tanto geográficos como conceptuales donde son más dolorosamente visibles las contradicciones de poder y subordinación, resistencia y rebelión.

Para conocer fronteras, hay que cruzar barreras, ser atravesada. Gloria Anzaldúa es una escritora que vive a varios niveles las contradicciones (un "nepantilismo" mental según ella) de ser mujer de frontera. Como se percibe en otras obras testimoniales de mujeres latinoamericanas, Anzaldúa ya no es una mujer callada y sufrida. Actúa en vez de reaccionar. Calificada por su cultura como "hija de la mala vida," "hocicona" y "andariega", se atreve a enfrentarse con su patriarcado rural aceptando que la resistencia y rebelión también son cosas de mujeres. Ella es la primera en su familia en seis generaciones que salió fuera del Valle a buscar su propia vida. Escribe en inglés y español según se lo pide el momento. Y al encontrar su propia voz, rechaza la inferioridad lingüística impuesta por nacionalistas de ambos lados de la frontera. Para muchos, hablamos inglés mal con acento mexicano y al mismo tiempo mutilamos el español. Pero como indica ella, el lenguaje chicano fue inventado para comunicar realidades y valores propios de una zona fronteriza y añade: "Presently, this infant language, this bastard language, Chicano Spanish, is not approved by any society. But we Chicanos no longer feel that we need to beg entrance, that we need always to make the first overture—to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos, apology blurting out of our mouths with every step. Today we ask to be met halfway" (Preface).

Como Paredes e Hinojosa, empieza su recuento familiar, "The Homeland, Aztlán/El otro México", registrando la historia de dominación y resistencia, pero ahora enfatizando las voces de mujeres. Después de la rebelión de los sediciosos en 1915, la dominación se llevó a cabo con la pérdida de los ranchos de sus abuelas. Así recuerda su madre: "*Mi pobre madre viuda perdió* two-thirds of her *ganado*. A smart *gabacho* lawyer took the land away *mamá* hadn't paid taxes. *No hablaba inglés*, she didn't know how to ask for time to raise the money" (8). Y Anzaldúa añade: "My father's mother, Mama Locha, also lost her *terreno*. For a while we got $12.50 a year for the "mineral rights" of six acres of cemetery, all that was left of the ancestral lands. Mama Locha had asked that we bury her there beside her husband. *El cementerio estaba cercado*. But there was a fence around the cementery, chained and padlocked by the ranch owners of the surrounding land. We couldn't even get in to visit the graves, much less bury her there. Today, it is still padlocked. The sign reads: 'Keep out. Trespassers will be shot'" (8). Década tras década, la fisonomía natural se transformó hasta que en los cincuenta, Anzaldúa, de niña, vio la tierra completamente parcelada para el beneficio de compañías norteamericanas. Desplazados de sus terrenos hereditarios, los Anzaldúa se convirtieron en inquilinos trabajando cerca del King Ranch para Rio Farms Incorporated.

La transformación completa del valle del Río Grande y toda la frontera no cesó

en la "línea" internacional. Hoy día, observa Anzaldúa, compañías estadounidenses (RCA, Fairchild, Litton, Zenith, y Motorola, por ejemplo), bajo un programa de cooperación, controlan la economía fronteriza por medio de las maquiladoras, las plantas industriales en ciudades mexicanas fronterizas, cuya fuerza de labor, en alto porcentaje, está compuesta de mujeres (10). Este desplazamiento de mujeres junto con las oleadas de emigrantes hacia el norte ha reemplazado las estructuras sociales de comunidades rurales. En su lugar, nace una nueva cultura urbana fronteriza superexplotada no sólo económica sino también culturalmente por la penetración de medios de comunicación masivos norteamericanos:

> Working eight to twelve hours a day to wire backup lights for U.S. autos or solder miniscule wires in TV sets is not the Mexican way. While the women are in the maquiladoras, the children are left on their own. Many roam the street, become part of *cholo* gangs. The infusion of values of the white culture, coupled with the exploitation by that culture, is changing the Mexican way of life. (10)

Este estilo de vida tiene su resonancia para mexicanos del norte y así lo verifica en Tijuana y Mexicali Leobardo Saravia Quiroz del Colegio de la Frontera Norte:

> Los movimientos juveniles otorgan a la frontera una vistosa singularidad. A los principios de los setenta irrumpen los cholos: jóvenes, que con impulso gregario característico, se organizan en bandas. Viven en la periferia no sólo urbana sino social. Analfabetos funcionales, rescatan la tradición del pachuquismo californiano de los cuarenta y la adaptan a sus necesidades identificatorias. ... El cholismo no nace como proyecto político o cultural sino como actitud defensiva ante una sociedad hostil. (Saravia Quiroz 49)

Al otro lado de la línea, escribe Anzaldúa, a la mujer indocumentada no le espera una vida mejor. Al querer cruzar la frontera, estará sujeta a la violencia del "coyote". En los centros urbanos del norte puede encontrar alojamiento con sus familiares o puede formar parte de una población de desalojados o desamparados (los *homeless*). Si le toca buena suerte puede encontrar trabajo en una fábrica o en la industria costurera, o de sirvienta en una casa particular o en los grandes hoteles de lujo desde San Francisco, a Chicago hasta Nueva York.

V

> The creators of borders...are...great pretenders. They post their projects in the world with the sturdiest available signs and hope

> that conventions (or, in the instance of California a language law) will keep them in place. But even as the first stakes are driven, the earth itself, in all its intractable shiftiness, moves toward displacement. Amused, "unamerican" spectators—who may not even know how to read—recognize immediately that they, too, have a stake in displacement.
>
> Houston A. Baker, Jr., "LimIts of the Border"

Dentro de una nueva problemática histórica en que parecen borrarse las fronteras entre norte y sur, Primer y Tercer Mundo, debe insertarse la literatura chicana contemporánea. Con la pieza musical dedicada a las chalequeras de la Suggs Clothing Manufacturing Company, Hinojosa aludía, en 1976, al avanzado proceso de industrialización en el suroeste, en el cual la mujer de clase obrera tendría un papel importante. Desde la década de los treinta hasta los setenta, compañías norteamericanas instalaron sus fábricas en el suroeste de los Estados Unidos para aprovecharse de la labor de costureras chicanas y mexicanas. Ahora, en la década de los noventa, somos testigos de dramáticos cambios demográficos en el suroeste de los Estados Unidos y en el norte de México que determinarán el futuro de la cultura chicana-mexicana. En un breve período de treinta años, de 1950 a 1980, la población de ciudades mexicanas fronterizas, desde Tijuana en el Pacífico hasta Matamoros en el Golfo de México, se ha cuadruplicado (Wiley y Gottlieb 258). Mujeres y hombres mexicanos y latinoamericanos se han congregado en la frontera con el propósito de encontrar trabajo, ya sea en las maquilas mexicanas establecidas primero bajo el Programa Industrial Fronterizo de 1966 y ahora bajo el Tratado de Libre Comercio, o en los centros urbanos de los Estados Unidos. Y debido a la enorme influencia cultural y económica de los Estados Unidos, podemos imaginarnos a futuros ciudadanos mexicanos como si fueran chicanos en potencia.

Un fenómeno semejante ocurre al norte de la frontera. California, por ejemplo, será el primer estado compuesto de una población proveniente de varias regiones del Tercer Mundo; poco después del año 2000, la población angloamericana será una minoría. Si esta tendencia en la población continúa, California experimentará un trastrocamiento completo en el porcentaje de blancos a minorías de 1945. Sin embargo, existe la posibilidad que algunas regiones de los Estados Unidos—especialmente en California y Tejas, como en otras áreas del Tercer Mundo, incluyendo Africa del Sur—serán compuestas de una minoría dominante blanca y una masa al margen del poder. Así una antigua cultura fronteriza con nuevas realidades políticas, sociales y económicas, extendiéndose desde San Francisco, Chicago y Nueva York hasta el D.F., Centroamérica y toda la zona caribeña se reafirma en el escenario político internacional.

VI

> La tierra, en parte, se la quitaron a los viejos; en parte, nosotros mismos también la perdimos y otros más la vendieron. Eso ya pasó ... y, como quiera que sea, la tierra ni se muere ni se va a ningún lado. A ver si mis hijos o los de ellos, cuando los tengan ... a ver si ellos mantienen o si recobran parte de ella.
> Si también nos quitan o si perdemos o vendemos el idioma, entonces no habrá remisión. El día que muera el español esto dejará de ser el valle.
>
> Rolando Hinojosa, *Claros varones de Belken*

La literatura fronteriza que surgió de Brownsville, Mercedes y Hargill no es una literatura de minorías al margen de la historia y de las grandes tradiciones literarias norteamericana e hispanoamericana. Fronteras, *borders*, han llegado a ser parte de la condición humana en la modernidad del siglo XX; el mestizaje pertenece al futuro. Y nuestros tres ejemplos—la tradición oral estudiada por Paredes, la crónica postmoderna de Hinojosa y el testimonio autobiográfico de Anzaldúa—revelan que estamos vinculados culturalmente a niveles populares y literarios a todo un vasto continente de habla hispana. Además, como indican las estadísticas de la frontera norte en las postrimerías del siglo XX, estos escritores están en la vanguardia de un cambio epocal en el cual debemos incluir la surgiente población indígena del mundo hispanoamericano.[10] Hay que reconocer que cualquier historia literaria americana que ignore estos cambios culturales o las contribuciones de escritoras y escritores chicanos quedará incompleta.

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NOTAS

* Una traducción en inglés de este ensayo se publicó en *Dispositio* 16.41 (1991). El original en español ha sido actualizado con nuevo material para este número de *Mester*.

[1] Entrevista personal con Américo Paredes, en la Universidad de Tejas, Austin, el 13 de junio, 1990.

[2] Paredes ha mantenido una relación ambivalente con el gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Escribió una poema "The Four Freedoms" (*Between Two Worlds* 58) en 1941 como respuesta escéptica al famoso discurso del mismo título del presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt al congreso de los Estados Unidos el 6 de enero de 1941. En su discurso, Roosevelt había declarado sobre una invasión inminente: "The first phase of invasion of this Hemisphere would not be the landing of regular troops. The necessary strategic points would be occupied

by secret agents and their dupes—and great numbers of them are already here, and in Latin America... That is why the future of all American Republics is today in serious danger" (7). Paredes escribe: "este país de "Cuatro Libertades"/nada nos puede dar./Justicia...¿acaso existe?/La fuerza es la justicia,/palabras humorísticas: Justicia y Libertad" (58). Después de terminar su servicio en el ejército estadounidense, Paredes permaneció en el Japón por cinco años. En diciembre 24 de 1948, escribió una poema irónico en ocasión de la muerte del general Hideki Tojo a manos de las autoridades "civilizadas" de los Estados Unidos. Ver "Westward the Course of Empire" (*Between Two Worlds* 111).

[3] Ambos Walter Prescott Webb y J. Frank Dobie eran distinguidos profesores en la Universidad de Tejas, Austin, cuando Paredes publicó su tesis. En *"With His Pistol in His Hand"*, escribe con humor de las interpretaciones "objetivas" de Webb: "Professor Webb does not mean to be disparaging [de los mexicanos]. One wonders what his opinion might have been when he was in a less scholarly mood and not looking at the Mexican from the objective point of view of the historian" (17). En la década de los treinta en *George Washington Gómez*, Paredes inventa un personaje K. Hank Harvey, o sea J. Frank Dobie, de Nueva York, que se convierte en un tejano con sombrero y botas, reconocido como la autoridad sobre el folklore tejano sin saber español. Paredes escribe del papel cultural de Harvey: "Harvey's fame grew too big even for vast Texas, and soon he was a national and then an international figure. For K. Hank Harvey filled a very urgent need; men like him were badly in demand in Texas. They were needed to point out the local color, and in the process make the general public see that starving Mexicans were not an ugly, pitiful sight but something very picturesque and quaint, something tourists from the North would pay money to come and see. By this same process bloody murders became charming adventure stories, and men one would have considered uncouth and ignorant became true originals" (271-272).

[4] Para dos estudios recientes de *George Washington Gómez*, ver Ramón Saldívar "Borderlands of Culture" y José David Saldívar "Américo Paredes".

[5] Webb, en *Texas Rangers*, escribe del mexicano: "Without disparagement, it may be said that there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature, or so the history of Texas would lead one to believe. This cruelty may be a heritage from the Spanish of the Inquisition; it may, and doubtless should, be attributed partly to the Indian blood. ... The Mexican warrior ... was, on the whole, inferior to the Comanche and wholly unequal to the Texan. The whine of the leaden slugs stirred in him an irresistible impulse to travel with rather than against the music. He won more victories over the Texans by parley than by force of arms. For making promises—and for breaking them—he had no peer." Citado por Paredes (*"With His Pistol in His Hand"* 17). José David Saldívar ofrece un estudio revelador del diálogo académico entre Webb y Paredes en su "Chicano Border Narratives as Cultural Critique".

[6] Debemos mencionar que Hinojosa escribió su tesis de maestría sobre Cervantes y sus tesis doctoral sobre Benito Pérez Galdós. Estos clásicos españoles son fuentes del realismo de Hinojosa.

[7] Ver páginas preliminaries de *Generaciones*. En 1976, el jurado de Casa de las Américas contaba con Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay), Domingo Miliani (Venezuela), Lincoln Silva (Paraguay) y Lisandro Otero (Cuba). El manuscrito que Hinojosa envió a Cuba a través de la embajada suiza no llevaba título. El libro fue publicado en Cuba en 1976 con el título *Klail City y sus alrededores*.

[8] Hinojosa es "Ellen Clayton Garwood Professor of English and Creative Writing" en la Universidad de Tejas, Austin.

[9] Ver Barbara Harlow, "Sites of Struggle", y Sonia Saldívar-Hull, "Feminism on the Border", para estudios comparativos de la mujer chicana y mujeres del Tercer Mundo.

[10] En 1978, en *América Indígena* (Mayer y Masferrer) se estimó la población indígena en unos 27.9 millones, cifra sumamente conservadora según los investigadores. El doblamiento de los 13 millones de indígenas en 1962 demostró a los investigadores que esta población no sólo es un factor constante en Hispanoamérica sino que está en pujante crecimiento, tendencia que se proyecta hacia el futuro. En 1993, el *Los Angeles Times* ("A New Call for Indian Activists" H1) determinó la población indígena entre 20 a 40 millones.

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Redefining Epic and Novel through Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* and Rivera's *Y no se lo tragó la tierra*

Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* is a novel that exposes the reality of Mexican provincial life in Jalisco through the utilization of the hero archetype, popular beliefs, myths and the oral testimony of women.[1] In his experimental novel, Rulfo captures the collective voice of repressed souls lost in a town of floating spirits. Tomás Rivera's *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* is also a developing genre that redefines the reality of northern Mexican culture in the U.S. Southwest through the representation of migrant farmworker culture. Rivera transforms the life of the Mexican American into a Chicano narrative. Both novels reflect a more "truthful" picture of reality that transcends the boundaries of specific genres, such as the traditional epic and the realist novel. This essay will focus on the evolution of epic form, along with its utilization of the hero archetype, in Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* and Tomás Rivera's *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* in order to illustrate the development of the novel.

Traditionally, readers of literature have been conditioned to perceive the epic in a linear manner. This is due in large part to its formulaic structure. The construction of this long narrative poem has been to present a story in a logical, chronological, one-dimensional perspective in which the central characters can be easily identified. For example, the epic hero is presented as a larger- than-life figure whose actions are related to the survival of his people. Moreover, because of his morality and righteousness, a reward of happiness will await him in the end. In other words, based on a linear history, the uniqueness and destiny of each character will be determined by his ability to recognize and, most importantly, to act against oppressive circumstances that are present in daily life. Thus, the final result and purpose of the traditional epic, as Aden Hayes' states, "is to be of continuing use and inspiration to a people as they move forward in history, to be repeated down to the last generation of the tribe" (280).

More importantly, however, the origin of the epic is the oral tradition of myths

that belong to a distant legendary past (Frye 51). These traditional stories about gods, kings and heroes serve as a foundation for the creation of the world, and at times, its future destruction. Therefore, a property of the epic becomes the battleground of "commencement" and "honors," "firsts" and "bests," where a specific form of popular knowledge is accepted in many cases as the literal truth. Although these myths are filled with inconsistencies and absurdities, a central focus of the epic is to establish the legitimacy of man and his relationship with the universe. With this in mind, it becomes imperative for the establishment of a grand past for the world of the epic, a world that separates itself from contemporary reality.

It is this "sacred" past, however, as Mikhail M. Bakhtin states, that allows the epic to remain locked out and distant from the present:

> The epic world is an utterly finished thing, not only as an authentic event of the distant past but also on its own terms and by its own standards; it is impossible to change, to re-think, to re-evaluate anything in it. It is completed, conclusive and immutable, as a fact, an idea and value. This defines absolute epic distance.(17)

It is precisely this separation from and completeness with relation to contemporary reality that serve as a source of power for the epic's "absolute past." It will be impossible to change this relationship because of the boundaries and limitations the epic form has set for itself. These limitations imply a finished form for the epic as a genre.

In contrast, the novel as a developing genre is never complete for it changes according to social and historical circumstances.[2] The novel parodies, exposes and subverts the epic's own formal limitations: thus, it creates its own particular style, incorporating and reformulating other genres. For example, the traditional filial bonds of the epic world in Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* collapse because the quest of the son Juan Preciado begins with the death of his mother and ends with the death of his father. In fact, the reader will understand that the story of the Preciados and the Páramos only demeans and debases every aspect of what an epic tale should represent. Its story line is chaotic, fragmented and confusing, where the reader must unite the scattered pieces of the narrative puzzle. Instead of communicating a message of bravery and hope, *Pedro Páramo* sends a message of death and despair. If the reader chooses the hero to be Juan Preciado, this character fails; he not only fails in his search for his father Pedro Páramo, he is eventually suffocated and succumbs to death like the rest of the characters. If the hero is presumed to be Pedro Páramo, the reader soon realizes that this character is only a self-absorbed tyrant who swallows every last breath of life and hope that the Comalan people possess. No matter how the novel is interpreted, the end result is failure: failure to act, to respond, to take charge of one's own destiny in life. Thus, the souls of the individuals are forced to live in a state of purgatory with an illusion of what could have been.

The Comalan people will be condemned for the rest of their lives for not allowing their true spirits to live while they were actually alive. Their spirits will eternally and hopelessly float in limbo, a state of nothingness, recalling the past, recalling what could have been if they would have taken control of their lives. Yet, it is what the story of *Pedro Páramo* negates that creates the allusion to an epic. Rulfo has actually created what should be termed a satiric prose epic.[3] This method is achieved ingeniously by implied comparison or contrast. As often stated, one can only understand the darkness if light has been reveale , otherwise the darkness will only distort what is considered true and real. Rulfo's creation of darkness and despair in *Pedro Páramo* becomes more powerful and absolute of what has been considered, traditionally, the epic. In fact, every aspect of the epic in the plot falls to pieces, leaving only the skeletal structures to bear witness. Examples of this are evident throughout the novel, such as Susana San Juan's experience in a cave filled with bones and, here, Pedro Páramo's final moment:

> Se apoyó en los brazos de Damiana Cisneros e hizo intento de caminar. Después de unos cuantos pasos cayó, suplicando por dentro; pero sin decir una sola palabra. Dio un golpe seco contra la tierra y se fue desmoronando como si fuera un montón de piedras. (159)

Viewed from this perspective, the reader is, therefore, forced to reconsider the traditional, imaginary style of the epic and its definitions. Rulfo's creation of Mexican reality is captured through the use of the archetype, oral tradition and the testimony of women. The reality of these traditional myths is a frightening account for the people of Comala, past and present. It is these oral beliefs that transform themselves into wailing spirits, and eventually into the metaphors of literature.

As stated by Jean Franco, this attitude presented by Rulfo is one where "environment still dominates human beings" (348). The escape for these people is an illusion; their path is already predetermined because the traditional myths that they live by dominate their daily lives and, eventually, their wandering souls. Nonetheless, these people continue to live by the deep-rooted Mexican myths that control and repress the Comalan people. First there is Pedro Páramo, the "macho," the corrupt landowner who sucks the life and blood of the people of Comala. Next, there is Miguel Páramo, one of Pedro's many children throughout the town, who embodies the worst passed down from a macho. Miguel is a ruthless man who abuses women, and is finally killed by his stallion, a symbolic representation of his masculinity. Finally, there is Dorotea who like the Comalan women except Susana San Juan feels unfulfilled as a woman unless she bears a child. Ironically, as Franco states, it is these traditional myths that live on, while all the people of Comala have passed away (350). Therefore, the reader must inevitably conclude that the actual book, in abstract terms, is a myth because the characters from beginning to end do not exist; they are all dead and they themselves represent a myth. In other words, all

of the characters in Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* are dead from the beginning of the book, including Juan Preciado who initiates one story (since there are actually two overlapping plots) with the search of his father. Thus, the memory of myths serves as a form of ideological manipulation and a constant reminder of how the Comalan people failed to question and criticize the validity of deep-rooted myths that repressed their true spirit.

These Mexican myths presented by Rulfo are challenged by the characters in Tomás Rivera's *Y no se lo tragó la tierra*. In fact, Rivera gained valuable insight from the works of Juan Rulfo, especially his *Llano en llamas* (1953). *Tierra* can also be considered a prose epic in that the theme imitates traditional epic form. Yet, *Tierra* also allows for the adaptation and redefinition of a social context; it is this repetition and reinterpretation of ideals within a given culture, through the actual format of an epic, that transforms this genre into a comic prose epic.[4] This repetition of motifs implies that there can no longer exist any genres that remain pure. The genre must change and evolve because it becomes a parody. What *Tierra* presents to the reader is, according to Héctor Calderón, "a reformulation of the Mexican-mestizo cultural world into the beginning of a Chicano narrative tradition" (100). Moreover, as Calderón adds, through its natural unfolding and reformulation into narrative, the reader processes and comprehends the fragmented and developing culture of the Chicano in the United States:

> ...the role of the reader emerges from the gaps that must be filled in order to insure structural and thematic continuity.Thus the developing plot is explicitly based on a series of changing relationships. That the narrative supplies instructions for this process of understanding can be grasped from the last interpolated fragment and the final collective moment in which Rivera delivers his views on the social function of art as these inform the act of reading. (105)

The reader is able to participate in the actual reconstruction of the entire novel, according to his/her own development. This participation of the reader implies the obligation to consciously recreate the reality that has been presented. Similar to Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, *Tierra* is a novel that reforms and critiques reality (Calderón 100-101). Therefore, the relationship of literature with society is vital and imperative to the imagination of the reader.

Tierra's structure is composed of fourteen titled *cuentos* and thirteen untitled *cuadros* with the first and the last *cuento* representing the framework for the entire novel.[5] Within this framework, there are twelve *cuentos or* short stories, representing a calendar year, all united by the central story, "*Y no se lo tragó la tierra.*" Also present throughout the narrative are the thirteen brief *cuadros* that frame each *cuento* and that also possess a sense of unity and a stream-of-consciousness for the reader. Most importantly, however, these archetypal stories describe life experi-

ences that discuss universal themes such as man and nature, alienation, love, betrayal, death, and a yearning for community. Unlike Rulfo's novel, the characters in *Tierra* have not been swallowed up by the earth and possess an adventurous spirit. In an interview with Juan Bruce-Novoa, Tomás Rivera stated that he wished to highlight forever the heroic quality of farmworkers in the Southwest:

> I felt that I had to document the migrant worker para siempre [forever], para que no se olvidara ese espirítu tan fuerte de resistir y continuar under the worst conditions [so that their very strong spirit of endurance and will to go on under the worst of conditions hould not be forgotten], because they were worse than slaves. El esclavo es una inversión [A slave is an investment], so you protect him to keep him working. A migrant worker? You owe him nothing. If he came to you, you gave him work and then just told him to leave. No investment. If he got sick, you got rid of him; you didn't have to take care of him. It was bad, labor camps and all that. (151)

Through this documentation, the reader is allowed to view the collective lives of migrant workers, of Mexican Americans, presented in a non-conventional epic style.

Moreover, if one is to apply the motif of the hero archetype, the unnamed migrant child, the central protagonist, stands alone as the epic hero projection of his working-class community of Mexican-Americans. This narrator/protagonist is not actually present in all of the stories; yet, it is his opening and concluding story underneath the house that allow the novel to have coherence and transcendence. It is during his "solitary confinement" that the unidentified child begins to piece together the fragmented, episodic, and puzzling experiences that have now shaped his new ideological formation as a young Chicano. This new level of critical consciousness attained by the protagonist has allowed him the freedom to question the validity of myths, truths and opinions that stand in the way of his future development:

> Se sintió contento de pronto porque al pensar... se dio cuenta de que en realidad no había perdido nada. Había encontrado. Encontrar y reencontrar y juntar. Relacionar esto con esto, esto con aquello, todo con todo. Eso era. Eso era todo. Y le dio más gusto. (169)

This ideological and spiritual exploration is, ironically, a quality the characters of Rulfo failed to express (excluding Susana San Juan). By liberating himself of myths (like the myths of demons and gods) and traditional beliefs that continue to oppress his people, the young Chicano realizes that if "There is no devil. There is nothing"

(63). According to Ramón Saldívar, this revelation allows the child "to liquidate oppressive idols and to articulate the power of self-determination" (84). Again, this critical awareness is not achieved by the people of Comala. The protagonist in *Tierra* will now be the creator of his own destiny, and no longer will he utilize a system of religious beliefs that serve to justify his state of misery and oppressiveness.

It is throughout this allegorical year that *Tierra* reveals the initiation of heroism for the unnamed migrant child. The young Chicano undergoes a series of excruciating experiences that take him from ignorance and immaturity to a new level of social and spiritual awareness. Like the quest of the traditional epic hero, the protagonist experiences a metaphorical level of separation, transformation and return. In doing so, he develops a higher level of critical consciousness that allows the child the freedom to become an active agent of resistance against the forces of oppression. No longer will the environment, as in Comala, dominate and control the young Chicano. Where *Pedro Páramo* sends a cry of despair, *Tierra* offers a message of hope and heroism within the adventurous souls of its characters.

In Rulfo's novel the reader is able to view the demystification of what has traditionally been viewed as an epic through comparison. Rulfo has destroyed the sacred boundaries of the epic tradition and brought it closer to the grasp of reality. In *Pedro Páramo*, the reader is able to turn the epic upside down, expose it, play with it, and freely examine and experiment with its nature. Reality, therefore, must now be seen in a different light. Similarly, when the motifs of the epic are parodied, such as in *Tierra*, the reader must also recreate "reality" and the "natural" present in the past. This unconventional style forces the reader to examine the truthfulness and objectiveness of images presented in the past as "real." Thus, one is led to the question: Which are the images that present a truthful reflection of what constitutes the real? The fears, struggles and hopes within the characters of *Pedro Páramo* and *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* answer this final question for the reader.

José R. López-Morín
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NOTES

1. I make reference here to the motif or theme of the hero archetype,where the patterns of transformation and redemption are specific characteristics associated with the traditional interpretation of the epic hero. These heroic characteristics are highlighted when the plots of these tales utilize motifs, such as a quest or an initiation process, which serve as a testing ground for a code of heroic behavior. The archetype of the hero in *Pedro Paramo*, however, is subverted.

2. Although the term "novel" seems to be taken for granted when used for the classification or categorization of a "book," the term is still relatively difficult to define. To simply state that the novel is an extended work of fiction, written in prose does not completely convey the

true meaning of the word. I find it more practical comparing this unique genre with other fixed genres. For practical purposes, however, I will define the term novel from the vantage point that it mirrors contemporary reality with its diversity of speech, experience and constant prediction of a future. With this in mind, the novel reflects the tendency of a new world still in the making, and therefore, it cannot be classified as a finished process.

3. Frye describes satire as a critique of heroic narratives, as "a parody of romance" (223).

4. Like the plot of comedy, Rivera is concerned with integrating the individual, the family, and the group into society as a whole. See Frye on comedy (218).

5. To describe the brief, untitled fragments, Rivera used the Spanish term *cuadro*.

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Conciencia y escritura en el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega y Sandra Cisneros

> Speaking of oneself is allowed, when it is necessary, and among other necessary occasions two are most obvious: One is when it is impossible to silence great infamy and danger without doing so ... The other is when, by speaking of himself, the greatest advantage follows for others by way of instruction; and this reason moved Augustine to speak of himself in his confessions, so that in the progress of his life, which was from bad to good, and from good to better, and from better to best, he furnished example and teaching which could not have been obtained from any other equally truthful testimony. (Dante en Freccero 2-3)

> I also know that that part which I recounted was not the most important. It was made the most important because I fixed it in words. And now what am I? Not he who lived but he who described. Oh, the only important part of life is the regathering [*raccoglimento*]. (Svevo en Fleishman 4).

I

Este trabajo propone explorar la continuidad temática que existe en la obra del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega y Sandra Cisneros. Como observa Cedomil Goic en su *Historia y Crítica de la Literatura Hispanoamericana*, "Los narradores y los poetas contemporáneos [además de los críticos] establecen un diálogo textual con la literatura de las crónicas y antiguos poemas épicos . . ." (36) Cita como ejemplo de esta exploración a Miguel Angel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, Julio Cortázar y Carlos Fuentes, entre otros (36). Este trabajo no intenta proponer que la raíz de la narrativa chicana se encuentra en la obra del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega sino que ambos, el Inca y Cisneros, dada sus circunstancias históricas particulares, comparten ciertos temas. El punto de partida de este trabajo será la voz autobiográfica que surge de sus

respectivas obras reflejando semejantes preocupaciones.

Antes de proseguir será revelador examinar dos artículos pertinentes al intento de este trabajo. El primero es el artículo de Roberto González-Echevarría, "The Law of the Letter: Garcilaso's *Commentaries* and the Origins of the Latin American Narrative." El título sugiere que el origen de la narrativa latinoamericana se encuentra en los *Comentarios reales* del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. Pero González-Echevarría, además de crear una polémica sobre datos históricos con José Durand[1], no cumple con su propuesta. En vez de explicar cómo la narrativa latinoamericana surge de la obra del Inca, explica cómo el pícaro surge de la retórica notarial que caracterizaba toda la escritura del siglo XVI y de la cual Garcilaso era partícipe.

Al otro lado de la frontera, profundizando en la idea originalmente planteada por Luis Leal, Juan Bruce-Novoa, en su artículo "Naufragios en los mares de la significación," sugiere que el origen de la narrativa chicana se detecta en los *Naufragios* de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. Aunque no se desvía de su propuesta, como González-Echevarría, tampoco nos convence de ella. De hecho, su tesis de que la alternancia de Cabeza de Vaca, la oscilación de su identidad entre español e indígena, es símbolo del carácter o estado chicano, es aplicable a un sin fin de narraciones en donde el cautivo se identifica con su capturador y experimenta una alternancia en su personalidad. Además, simpatizar e identificar con los indígenas, estén donde estén, es un acto humano que trasciende razas. No es justo proponer que la transformación en Cabeza de Vaca es exclusiva o inherente al carácter chicano. En fin, ninguno de los artículos logra articular lo que exactamente vincula las dos épocas literarias.

Al proponer una continuidad temática —diferente a trazar una continuidad directa entre crónica y narrativa contemporánea— nos podemos acercar mucho mejor a lo que González-Echevarría y Bruce-Novoa intuyen correctamente. Sí hay una conexión entre la crónica y la literatura contemporánea y, más específicamente, hay una conexión entre la crónica y la narrativa chicana. Quizás la respuesta yace en el elemento autobiográfico elaborado en ambas obras que, a su vez, traza un proceso semejante: la toma de conciencia que transforma al escritor y que lo motiva a tomar pluma en mano.

II

Los temas que caracterizan la obra del Inca, identidad étnica, lenguaje, escritura y conciencia intelectual, son, en gran parte, producidos por el colonialismo que sufre su país, el Perú. Dentro de éstos florecen subtemas que reflejan el ser producto de dos culturas: el mestizaje, el bilinguismo, la recuperación de una tradición oral y el dar testimonio como testigo de lo visto y vivido. Estos temas, tan involucrados en el ser mismo del Inca, producen una voz autobiográfica como única solución al acercamiento de ellos. Esto será verdad para Sandra Cisneros también.

Al equiparar un texto histórico con uno de ficción es necesario referirnos a la problemática inherente en él. Como señala Hayden White, el punto de contacto entre este tipo de comparación se erige en el hecho de que la base del discurso

histórico yace en los modelos literarios de la época. Para White, los discursos narrativos son "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented as found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (82). Al desear escribir una crónica histórica, los autores o historiadores se remitían a la literatura que circundaba su mundo. El Inca, como señala Aurelio Miró Quesada Sosa, utiliza varias fuentes literarias, por ejemplo, Alonso de Ercilla y su obra *La araucana* en *La Florida* en especial aunque también en otras obras. José Durand ha hecho un estudio de la biblioteca de Garcilaso en donde existen obras de ficción de la época que de algún modo influyeron en su estilo retórico[2]. Según White, la base común entre el discurso histórico y el ficticio es lo que él llama *emplotment*, el proceso creativo al que se somete un texto. Ambos discursos están organizados en base a una selección de eventos y luego son marcados con un tono narrativo trágico, cómico o romántico. Sólo hay que recordar que los *Comentarios* del Inca, sobre todo la *Historia general*, muchas veces son vistos como una historia trágica.

Es importante subrayar que para el Inca fue imprescindible aprender la retórica renacentista de su época. Este cronista depende de ella para poder comunicar su ideología especial ante el público europeo. El Inca se ofrece a la Corona como "símbolo de su patria nativa . . . el primer natural del Nuevo Mundo que ofrecía al monarca, no una riqueza material, sino un alto tributo de cultura" (Quesada Sosa 109). Con este proyecto en mente, Garcilaso no tuvo otra salida que escribir bien: "Writing . . . was a form of legitimization and liberation. Garcilaso wrote, and wrote well, because he was encouraged to do so by the sociopolitical context in which he grew up" (González-Echevarría 116).

Bajo este marco teórico no es irrisorio considerar la obra del Inca junto con la de Sandra Cisneros. No sólo comparten una tradición retórica, un deseo de escribir bien, sino el elemento autobiográfico que sirve un propósito especial.

En ambas obras hay dos voces narrativas: la primera es dominante. En el caso del Inca es la voz del historiador que sirve de "comento y glosa" a las otras obras históricas. En Sandra Cisneros es la voz omnisciente de la narradora de su creación ficticia. La segunda voz es la autobiográfica que, por su sutileza, por su calidad efímera a lo largo de las obras, aparenta estar subordinada a la primera. Sin embargo, es la segunda voz narrativa, la personal, la íntima, la que logra narrar o construir la identidad del autor y por extensión la de su comunidad. Estas dos voces se intercalan a lo largo de la obra pero finalmente se unen en una toma de conciencia por parte del autor y su personaje.

III

Los primeros años del Inca en España son los momentos decisivos que lo impactan y lo convierten en el escritor que se preocupa por crear una historia que legitime a la raza mestiza no sólo en el presente sino en el futuro. Como él dira,"Porque en los tiempos venideros, que es cuando más sirven las historias, quizá holgarán saber estos principios" (207). En el año 1563, tres años después de su

llegada a España, el Inca experimenta una completa desilusión al serle negada la recompensa de su padre por una difamación contra éste a causa de su participación en la batalla de Huarina. Lope García de Castro, miembro del Consejo Real de las Indias, acusa al padre del Inca de haber traicionado a la Corona al darle su caballo a Gonzalo Pizarro facilitando así su victoria. En la corte, el Inca aprende que si el hecho está escrito en un libro es considerado parte de la historia oficial. Como le dice García de Castro,"Tiénenlo escrito los historiadores ¿y queréislo vos negar?" (*Historia General* 216).[3] El impacto de este evento sobre el Inca es evidente en la obra misma cuando el Inca responde con una protesta apasionada a los historiadores, ahora muertos, que habían escrito sobre el suceso:

> digo que no es razón que yo contradiga a tres testigos tan graves como ellos son, que ni me creeran ni es justo que nadie lo haga siendo yo parte. Yo me satisfago con haver dicho verdad, tomen lo que quisieren, que, si no me creeyeren, yo passo por ello dando por verdadero lo que dixeron de mi padre para honrarme y preciarme dello, con dezir que soy hijo de un hombre tan esforçado y animoso y de tanto valor . . . (*Historia General* 216)

El suceso deja a Garcilaso ante una encrucijada en su vida. Al serle negada una herencia material le es simbólicamente negada su herencia paterna. El Inca decide que se enfrentará a este insulto en una revisión histórica de los hechos. El Inca no sólo negará la acusación hacia su padre sino negará buena parte de la historia escrita sobre el Perú.

Un buen punto de partida para comprender mejor el impacto que este suceso tuvo sobre el Inca se encuentra en la transformación de su nombre propio.[4] La autonominalización en la historia del Inca sirve como suerte de manifiesto personal sobre su identidad. En el año 1563, ya en España, y después de la acusación por parte de Lope García de Castro sobre su padre, cambia su nombre de bautismo, Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, y adopta el nombre Gómez Suárez de la Vega. Cinco años más tarde lo cambia a Garcilaso de la Vega (Varner 225). Es este el nombre que escoge para hacerse conocer en el mundo literario, a su público europeo. Más tarde añadirá el título de el Inca o el Indio a sus obras. Desde el principio, "el Inca Garcilaso asume la necesidad de explicar sus antecedentes, manifestar sus orígenes, divulgar quién es él . . . " (Díaz Ruiz 214).[5] La importancia de este hecho yace en la relación directa que el Inca concibe entre la escritura y la representación de su ser. El hecho de que sus libros serán firmados con el nombre Indio o Inca Garcilaso de la Vega significa que él desea advertir desde un principio a su público que él es un mestizo y que se honra de serlo.

Para el Inca, el adoptar un nuevo nombre significa un nuevo comienzo y una nueva responsabilidad. Él ahora se dedica a la escritura y deja de lado con desilusión las batallas en la corte por la herencia de su padre. Varias veces a lo largo de los *Comentarios* dice, con melancolía, cómo llegó a dedicarse a la vida solitaria de

escribir. Se retira del mundo que no lo reconoce y se dedica a:

> acogerme a los rincones de la soledad y pobreza donde (como lo dixe en el proemio de nuestra historia de la Florida) passo una vida quieta y pacífica, como hombre desengañado y despedido deste mundo y de sus mudanças, sin pretender cosa dél, porque ya no hay para qué, que los más de la vida es passado, y para lo que queda proveerá el Señor del Universo, como lo ha hecho hasta aquí. Perdónenseme estas impertinencias, que las he dicho por quexa y agravio que mi mala fortuna en este particular me ha hecho, y quien ha escrito vidas de tantos no es mucho que diga algo de la suya. (*Historia General* 216)

Desde el comienzo de su labor, el Inca descubre que se ha embarcado en una búsqueda de su "inner standing," término aplicado a las obras autobiográficas y que se define como un viaje al descubrimiento del corazón del ser (Fleishman 11). En este proceso, "The life [o identidad] is represented in autobiography [o crónica] not as something established but as a process; it is not simply the narrative of the voyage, but also the voyage itself. . ." (Fleishman 11). Así se explica cómo, de la semilla de un evento en específico, brota una historia extensa sobre las dos culturas, la incaica y la española, que configuran la identidad del Inca y la comunidad que deseará servir. El Inca expresa con emoción la responsabilidad que siente hacia su comunidad al declarar: "mis parientes, los indios y mestizos del Cuzco y todo el Perú, serán jueces de esta mi ignorancia y de otras muchas que hallarán en esta mi obra; perdónenmelas, pues soy suyo, y que sólo por servirles tomé un trabajo tan incomportable como esto lo es para mis pocas fuerzas (sin ninguna esperanza de galardón suyo ni ajeno)" (*Comentarios* 349).

En el capítulo XV de la primera parte de los *Comentarios*, el Inca le pregunta a su tío materno sobre la historia de los Incas. Este pasaje revela una vacilación de adjetivos posesivos que muchos críticos han identificado como una vacilación de la identidad del Inca como joven de dieciséis o diecisiete años. Pero el dominio del Inca de la retórica era magnífica. Su maestría se manifiesta en una preocupación hacia su lector. Es difícil pensar que el Inca haya dejado esta vacilación algo confusa de adjetivos posesivos sin propósito. Esto lleva a dos hipótesis posibles: 1) el Inca está tan inconsciente de las dos culturas que transcurren en él que no se da cuenta de cómo privilegia por un instante la cultura incaica y por otro la española; ó 2) construye sus preguntas vacilantes a propósito para indicar que todavía no tiene conciencia de su identidad. Esta segunda hipótesis se confirma con el desarollo intelectual que se percibe en la segunda parte de los *Comentarios*. En todo caso, lo importante del pasaje es que la conversación oral entre el tío y el joven Inca es retrospectivamente recogida en la escritura. Es decir, la incorporación de un pasado oral se integrará a la escritura junto a la presencia del Inca como niño o joven. Esto se manifiesta en la última oración que el tío le dirige al Inca "Sobrino, yo te las diré

de muy buena gana; a ti te conviene oírlas y guardarlas en el corazón (es frase de ellos por decir en la memoria)" (*Comentarios* 29). El corazón como sinónimo de lo oral, lo presente, la presencia de la voz se transforma en la ausencia de la voz, la memoria, la escritura. El Inca se ofrece al trabajo de la escritura y señala que es "forzado del amor natural de la patria" a escribir sus *Comentarios reales*. Al adoptar un nuevo nombre, el Inca adopta una nueva visión que incorpore "la conservación de las antiguallas de mi patria, esas pocas que han quedado, porque no se pierdan del todo..." (*Comentarios* 290)

Hemos visto que el Inca pasa por una metamorfosis en su vida personal que se transmite luego en su discurso histórico. En su vida verdadera el impacto del caso de la batalla Huarina produce un cambio en su ser. De este cambio se percata el Inca/ joven protagonista que aparece en varios lugares a lo largo de los *Comentarios* buscando contestar las preguntas que circundan su identidad.

IV

Al comparar al Inca con Sandra Cisneros también se puede decir que la autora misma experimenta una toma de conciencia en su vida personal que la conduce a escribir. Al contrario de lo que sabemos sobre el Inca, Cisneros desde joven sabe que desea escribir, pero de forma semejante al Inca, le toma mucho tiempo descubrir su voz. La encrucijada a la que se enfrenta el Inca es parecida a la de Cisneros: confluyen en el centro de su ser cuestiones políticas, ideológicas y estéticas, todas arraigadas en su identidad personal. Cisneros, al enfrentarse a la creación de una voz poética, necesita contestar preguntas cruciales: ¿Cúal es su voz, quién es ella, para quién escribe? Como ella misma nos dice en un ensayo autobiográfico:

> I did not know I was a Chicana writer at this time and if someone had labeled me thus I think I would have denied it. I did not think I was unusual or different or apart from the rest of the dominant culture. I felt I was Mexican, and in some ways Puerto Rican because of the neighborhood I grew up in, and I especially felt American because all the literature I had read my whole life was mainstream and English the language I wrote in. Spanish was the private language of my childhood and I only spoke it with my father. ("Sandra Cisneros"5)

El Inca sentía semejante ambivalencia en torno a su identidad a su llegada a España. Antes de que se le negara la recompensa de su padre es posible que ambicionaba una vida cómoda integrada a la cultura dominante. Pero en el momento que cambia su perspectiva él también necesita contestar preguntas que tienen que ver con su propia identidad.

Para Sandra Cisneros la importancia de su identidad le es revelada en la escritura. Para ella la escritura es la voz franca, honesta, inescapable que le dice si ella está mintiéndose. En el Iowa Writer's Workshop Cisneros escribe al principio

con una voz ajena a ella. La búsqueda de su propia voz toma tiempo. Como el Inca, ella se retira del mundo por una época:

> In this search for a voice I became withdrawn again as in my former days. I became quiet and introverted and insecure among non-Third World people, a stigma which I have not to this day completely shaken off. . . It was not until this moment when I separated myself, when I considered myself truly distinct, that my writing acquired a voice. I began to write a series of autobiographical sketches . . . This is how *The House on Mango Street* was born . . . ("Sandra Cisneros" 61)

La vida personal de Cisneros se entremezcla con su personaje principal, Esperanza, en *The House on Mango Street*. Al principio ella niega todo lo relacionado con su identidad: su casa, su nombre, su familia. Al final, ya madura, asume la responsabilidad de ser la transmisora de lo olvidado. Al comienzo de la obra la conciencia de Esperanza es inocente. Aunque se le revela la importancia de la escritura, Esperanza no entiende las implicaciones de ello. En el fragmento "Born Bad," una tía de Esperanza le dice: "You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. You must keep writing. It will keep you free, and I said yes, but at that time I didn't know what she meant" (61). El Inca también señala que en su juventud no comprendía la importancia de los testimonios orales que escuchaba. En varias ocasiones Garcilaso lamenta no haber escuchado las historias del pasado incaico y español con mayor atención al decir: "y yo, como digo, las oí de mis mayores, aunque (como muchacho) con poca atención, que si entonces la tuviera pudiera ahora escribir otras muchas de grande admiración, necesarias en esta historia. Diré las hubiera guardado la memoria, con dolor de las que he perdido" (*Comentarios* 10)

En un fragmento titulado "My Name," Esperanza juega y fantasea con cambiar su nombre. Aunque esto aparenta ser un juego inocente está cargado de significado para la identidad de la chicana contemporánea.[6] Esperanza, como el Inca en su exégesis lingüística, explica los varios significados de su nombre: Aunque en inglés significa "hope," algo positivo, en español, para Esperanza, significa una cultura que ella no desea heredar por la subordinación de la mujer. Aquí vemos que, al contrario del Inca y su transformación nominal, Esperanza busca un nombre que la separe de una posible identificación con una parte de su cultura, la mexicana. Como nos dice sobre su abuela, de quien Esperanza hereda su nombre: "I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window" (11). No desea heredar la parte de la cultura que oprime la libertad de un individuo. El nombre que Esperanza desea adoptar, Zeze the X, es un nombre totalmente ajeno a su cultura pero que, en la opinión de Esperanza, revelaría su verdadero ser. Ella nos dice, "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees" (11). El nombre "Zeze the X" es, en esta etapa de su desarollo, uno que define los primeros esbozos de su "inner standing." Al final de la obra este deseo

de encontrar un nombre "more like the real me" se encontrará en la escritura.

Para la cultura aceptada, dominante, cambiar el nombre no afecta lo interior del ser. Pero, generalmente, para un grupo étnico, el cambio de nombre es un rito que se manifiesta o en el rechazo del ser o en la liberación del ser, como lo sería para Esperanza. Encontrar la armonía en un nombre, como lo hace el Inca, es encontrar la armonía interior.

¿Cuál es la metamorfósis que conlleva a la toma de conciencia de Esperanza? Al igual que Garcilaso, Cisneros misma es receptora de las historias de la gente de su comunidad. En una entrevista Cisneros revela acerca de la confección de su novela *The House*:

> They're all stories I lived, or witnessed, or heard; stories that were told to me. I collected those stories and arranged them in an order so they would be clear and cohesive. Because in real life, there's no order. . . Some of those stories unfortunately happened to me just like that. Some of the stories were my student's when I was a counselor; women would confide in me and I was so overwhelmed with my inability to correct their lives that I wrote about them. (Rodríguez Aranda 64-65)

Este sentimiento lo transmite a su personaje Esperanza quien es receptora y partícipe de las historias de su barrio. Ella, al igual que el Inca, escucha la rabia y la desesperación de la gente de su comunidad. Como el joven Garcilaso que escucha la desolación de los últimos incas, Esperanza jamás se olvida de estas voces y reconocerá que será su deber transmitir la historia de los suyos al mundo.

Finalmente, Esperanza, ya más madura, se da cuenta de la importancia del rol de la escritura en la formación de su identidad. En un fragmento titulado "The Three Sisters," una de sus tías le dice:

> When you leave you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are . . . You must remember to come back. For the ones who cannot leave as easily as you. (105)

Es interesante notar la influencia de los parientes en ambos escritores. Ellos dicen claramente que estos jóvenes serán la generación futura que asumirá la responsabilidad de una nueva identidad personal y colectiva. Esperanza tomará este consejo en serio y su regreso se manifestará en el acto de escribir. Ella dice "They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out" (110).

En conclusión, hemos ofrecido los elementos que reflejan una continuidad temática entre nuestros escritores mestizos, Garcilaso de la Vega y Sandra Cisneros.

Sus proyectos, aunque separados por siglos y por la ideología de sus respectivas épocas, representan una semejanza singular. Ambos experimentan una toma de conciencia que conlleva al acto de la escritura. Su escritura está informada por la voz autobiográfica que revela preocupaciones de identidad propia y colectiva. Ambos se dan cuenta de que sus propias vidas no tienen importancia de por sí para la historia pero al ser incorporadas en un discurso histórico o ficticio, en la escritura, cobran autoridad. De esta manera el *raccoglimento* de las memorias es el método de fecundar sus discursos para que perduren y sean vigentes en un futuro próximo.

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NOTAS

1. El artículo de José Durand que responde al de González-Echevarría se titula "En torno a la prosa del Inca Garcilaso".
2."La Biblioteca del Inca" incluye tales autores conocidos como: Mateo Alemán, Fernando de Rojas, Dante, Ariosto, Petrarca y Séneca.
3. Para un estudio detallado sobre el impacto de este evento en el Inca se puede recurrir a la biografía de John Grier Varner, *El Inca: The Life and Times of Garcilaso de la Vega*, en específico el Capítulo X, Parte I.
4. Aunque para algunos críticos especular sobre la alteración del nombre del Inca es "asunto muy traído" ("En torno a la prosa" 215), creo que es importante señalarlo en el contexto de este trabajo. El cambio de nombre es representativo de la lucha pública y privada del individuo y su representación en la sociedad en que vive. Por eso es interesante notar la conexión entre el Inca y su cambio de nombre y el cambio de nombre del autor judío Judah Abarbanal a León Hebreo cuya obra, *Dialoghi di Amore*, el Inca traduce al castellano. El cambio de nombre siempre ha sido un acontecimiento importante en la historia de un individuo.
5. Es importante destacar que aunque es en los *Comentarios reales*, parte I y II, donde generalmente se ubica la construcción de una identidad, la obra completa del Inca desde los *Diálogos de amor*, incluyendo a la *Relación de la descendencia de Garcí Pérez de Vargas* hasta la *Historia General* anticipa este proyecto. Incluso, la contemplación de sólo los prólogos, vistos como un conjunto, ofrecen una suerte de manifiesto personal sobre la identidad del Inca: quién es el Inca, de dónde viene, a quién se dirige y cuál es su propósito. También es interesante notar la transformación literaria del Inca que va desde una recopilación genealógica a una traducción de la obra de León Hebreo, a servir como etnógrafo del testimonio oral de Gonzalo Silvestre, hasta finalmente llegar a su "propia" obra.
Se podría trazar similar transformación en la obra literaria de Sandra Cisneros. Ella también se sirve de los prólogos como anuncio de un proyecto especial. *The House on Mango Street* es dedicada a las mujeres. Su última obra, *Woman Hollering Creek*, es dedicada a dos partes de su ser; a su madre "who gave me the fierce language" y a su padre "quien me dio el lenguaje de la ternura" Finalmente, la obra completa es dedicada a "mi querido público" y a la "Virgen

de Guadalupe de Tonantzín". Como es sabido, El Inca dedica su *Historia General* a la "Limpíssima Virgen".

6. La manera en que Cisneros se nominaliza fluctúa. En "A Partial Autobiography" se llama una chicana. En la entrevista citada se llama "a Mexican woman." En el MLA del año 1992 en Nueva York prefirió llamarse latina. En un ensayo reciente sobre ella en el *New York Times*, Cisneros dice, "I am a Latina" y explica que "'Hispanic' is English for a person of Latino origin who wants to be accepted by the white status quo, Latino is the word we have always used for ourselves" (Tabor C10). La fluctuación refleja una preocupación por representarse, como en el Inca, con exactidud. Por otro lado, es importante señalar que ambos términos —chicano y latina— han sido objetos de continuos debates políticos sobre la identidad y subsiguiente representación de ser hispano y americano en los Estados Unidos.

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Frontera Crossings: Sites of Cultural Contestation*

> Where the transmission of "national" traditions was once the major theme of world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees—these border and frontier conditions—may be the terrains of world literature.
>
> Homi Bhabba, "The World and the Home" (1992)

In an influential manifesto, "La Cultura Fronteriza," published in *La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line*, Guillermo Gómez-Peña theorized the trans-*frontera* urban galaxy of Tijuana and San Diego as a new social space filled with multicultural symbologies. Though perhaps too steeped in poststructuralist playfulness (at the expense of multicultural work), Gómez-Peña nevertheless hit upon one of the central truths of our Borderland culture: the extended *frontera* culture stretching from the shanty barrios of Tijuana and San Diego to the rich surf and turf of Santa Barbara (dominated by the megaspace of Los Angeles in the middle) is an enormous "desiring machine".[1] Such a notion of the *frontera* as a real zone with flows and interruptions, crossings and deportations, liminal transitions and reaggregations, is fundamental to my reading of U.S. border writing, for it will permit us to travel along different routes other than, say, the "Sunshine or Noir" and "Black or White" master dialectics thematized in Mike Davis's *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. While this is not the place to attempt a complete definition of U.S. border writing, the power of this formulation as developed by Chicano and Chicana writers is that it allows us to challenge nativist "Seal the Border" campaigns in California and the Southwest which feature so-called illegal aliens as invading pure national or cultural spaces. U.S. border writing, thus envisaged, allows us to begin remapping the national imaginary in more global terms.

The two-thousand mile-long U.S.-Mexico border, without doubt, produces millions of undocumented workers from Central America and Mexico who are essential to North American agriculture's, tourism's, and *maquiladora's* economic

machines. The border thus not only produces masses of agricultural farmworkers, low-tech laborers (mostly women), dishwashers, gardeners, and maids, but a military-like apparatus of INS helicopters, Border patrol agents with infrared camera equipment used to track and capture the border crossers from the South, and detention centers and jails designed to protect the Anglocentric minority in California who fear and even loathe these scores of *indocumentados*. Moreover, this desiring machine also comprises an enormous bureaucratic, political, cultural, and legal machine of *coyotes* (border crossing guides for hire), *pollos* (pursued undocumented border crossers), *fayuqueros* (food peddlers), *sacadineros* (border swindlers), *cholos/as* (Chicano/a urban youth), notary publics, public interest lawyers, public health workers, and so on, a huge "juridical-administrative-therapeutic state apparatus" (JAT)—to use Nancy Fraser's coinage (154).[2]

What matters here for our purposes is that the U.S.-Mexico border apparatus constructs the subject-positions exclusively for the benefits of the North American juridical-administrative-therapeutic state: juridically, it positions the migrant border crossers vis-a-vis the U.S. legal system by denying them their human rights and by designating them as "illegal aliens"; administratively, the migrant border crossers who desire amnesty must petition a bureaucratic institution created under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) to receive identification papers (including a social security card); and, finally, therapeutically, migrant border crossers in their shantytowns in canyons throughout California have to grapple with various county Health Departments and the Environmental Health Services offices. For instance, at one shantytown called El Valle Verde (Green Valley) in San Diego County, the Environmental Health Services's director shut down the migrant border crossers camp "for violations dealing with lack of potable water for drinking, building-code violations, fecal materials on the ground" (cited in Chávez), and so on.

In what follows, I will analyze Helena María Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" (1985) as an astonishing example of U.S. border writing. In broad strokes, Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" follows an anonymous washer woman's forced migrations from an unnamed Central American *pueblo* (where the military has disappeared her five-year-old son) to Juárez, Mexico, where she crosses the border without documentation into the United States, and finally makes her way to Los Angeles, where she phantasmatically continues searching for her missing child. In less than fifteen pages, Viramontes gives her readers a complex, passionate story about the cultures of fear simultaneously present both in Central America (the government's torture of subversives) and in Los Angeles (the government's unleashing of the INS and the LAPD on undocumented workers), and how the marginalized washer woman uses her subaltern position to reclaim what Jean Franco, elsewhere, has called the new social "polis."[3] Once on the mean streets of Los Angeles, Viramontes's protagonist turns the Anglo-American owned Cariboo Cafe into an arena of cultural contestation by substantially altering material tradition in the Americas, casting herself both as new cultural citizen and as a pan-

Latina Llorona (wailing woman), thus aligning herself with Mexican and Chicana new social movements.[4]

If "all machines have their mastercodes," as Antonio Benítez-Rojo suggested in a different context (17), what are the codebooks to the cultural machines of this Chicana Border writer? What networks of subcodes hold together Viramontes's multicultural work of art? What are the central rituals, ceremonies, and ideologies in the texts of the transfrontier "contact zone" (see Pratt)? And finally, what are the benefits of examining U.S. Borderland texts as cultural practices with institutional implications for (multi)cultural and critical legal studies?

To begin answering some of these questions, I want to continue examining "The Cariboo Cafe," by Helena Viramontes, coordinator of the Los Angeles Latino/a Writers Association and former literary editor of *Xismearte* magazine. I emphasize Viramontes's institutional grounding as coordinator and editor in Los Angeles because it is an unsettling fact that all too often U.S. Latino/a writers are omitted from intellectual surveys and literary histories. Even sympathetic, New Left surveys exploring the role played by waves of migrations of intellectuals to Los Angeles—from Charles F. Lummis and Theodor Adorno to Carey McWilliams—such as Mike Davis's superb *City of Quartz* schematizes his intellectual history in exclusively racialized black and white terms, or in linear East and West global mappings.[5] Like the scores of gardeners with their brooms and blowers working all over California, is not it about time that we sweep away once and for all this Manichean construction? Might not a sweeping, even crude, transnational South-North mapping (using the interpretive power of liminality) be more appropriate?

Anthropological discussion of migrant border-crossers as "liminals" can be said to begin with Leo Chávez's experimental ethnography, *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society*, where he describes migrant border crossing as "transitional" phases in the three-step process of ritual initiation. Relying and elaborating on Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* and Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process*, Chávez traces the interstitial stages migrant border crossers from both Mexico and Central America make in their journeys to the U.S. Borderlands. While Chávez, perhaps, overemphasizes "the transition people undergo as they leave the migrant life and instead settle in the United States" (4), we could indeed extend his sensitive reading of liminality by adding a synchronic dimension to the concept of liminality as Victor Turner suggested. For Turner (as put forth by Gustavo Pérez Firmat), "liminality should be looked upon not only as a transition between states but as a state in itself, for there exist individuals, groups, or social categories for which the "liminal" moment turns into a permanent condition" (viii-xiv).

A liminal reading of Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" thematizing the ritual process thus would emphasize both a temporal, processual view with a topo-spatial supplementation. Seen in this light, "The Cariboo Cafe" is built upon a series of multiple border crossings and multilayered transitions that an undocumented migrant washer woman undergoes as she moves from the South into the North.

Foremost among the transitions thematized in Viramontes's story are the actual border crossings the washer woman makes, for crossing both the *frontera del sur* in Central America and the U.S.-Mexico border without documentation is what anthropologist Chávez sees as the "monumental event" of many migrant border crossers' lives (4).

Like many undocumented migrant workers, the washer woman in Viramontes's text gathers resources and funding from her family and extended community (her nephew Tavo sells his car to send her the money for a bus ticket to Juárez, Mexico), for crossing the multiple border apparatus with its extended machines of *coyotes*, *sacadineros*, and *fayuqueros* is a financially exorbitant undertaking. Fundamentally, "The Cariboo Cafe" allegorizes hemispheric South-North border crossing in terms anthropologists such as Chávez see as emblematic of undocumented border crossers in general: "a territorial passage that marks the transition from one way of life to another" (4). As an exemplary border crossing tale, then, we can initially map "The Cariboo Cafe" in Chávez's temporal, ritualistic terms: it moves (in a non-linear narrative) through the phases of separation, liminality, and (deadly) reincorporation. Viramontes throughout her disjunctive narrative privileges the everyday experiences (the rituals of separation and liminality) the washer woman must face as she travels from her appointments with legal authorities in Central America (the military has tortured and "disappeared" her five-year-old son) to the actual border crossings and her final searches (together with two Mexican undocumented children Sonya and Macky) for sanctuary at a Borderland's cafe. The Cariboo Cafe, but whose sign symbolically reads as the "oo Cafe," for, "the paint's peeled off" (64) except for the two o's.[6] In other words, while anthropologists such as Chávez see the border "limen" as threshold, for Viramontes it is a lived socially symbolic space.

But why does Viramontes represent the border limen in "The Cariboo Cafe" as position and not as threshold? The reasons for this are complex, but one reason is that the washer woman, like the majority of undocumented migrants in the U.S., never acquires what Chávez calls "links of incorporation—secure employment, family formation, the establishment of credit, capital accumulation, competency in English" which will allow her to come into full cultural and legal citizenship (5). Not surprisingly, the washer woman in the story remains a "marginal" character whom the Anglo-American manager and cook of the "zero zero" cafe crudely describes as "short," "bad news," "street," "round face," "burnt toast color," and "black hair that hands like straight rope" (65). Given such racist synecdochic views of undocumented migrant border crossers as "otherness machines" (see Suleri 105), blocked from ever attaining full cultural and legal citizenship, why did the Central American washer woman migrate to the U.S. Borderlands? What narrative strategies did Viramontes use to represent the washerwoman's shifting and shifty migrations?

The first question is easier to answer than the second While the majority of undocumented border crossers from Mexico migrate to the U.S. for economic reasons and a desire for economic mobility (often doing so for generations and thus

seeing migration as family history), migration from Central America as Chávez emphasizes is a "relatively recent" phenomenon and is closely related to the Reagan-Bush war machine in support of "contras" in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.[7] Viramontes's washer woman thus migrates from her unnamed *pueblo* in Central America to escape from the political strife waged on Amerindians and mestizos/as, and more phantasmatically (given her post-traumatic stress syndrome) to continue searching for her five-year-old son:

> These four walls are no longer my house, the earth beneath it, no longer my home. Weeds have replaced all good crops. The irrigation ditches are clodded with bodies. No matter where we turn ... we try to live ... under the rule of men who rape women, then rip their bellies ... (T)hese men are babes farted out from the Devil's ass. (71)

Displaced by civil war, defeated by debilitating patriarchy (what Viramontes straightforwardly sees as "the rule of men" who have been "farted out from the Devil's ass"), and deranged by the murder of her son, the washer woman migrates, in stages, to the U.S. extended *frontera* to flee from guerrilla activity. Once across the U.S.-Mexican border, she will work "illegally" at jobs that, for the most part, legal Americans disdain: "The machines, their speed and dust," she says, "make me ill. But I can clean. I clean toilets, dump trash cans, sweep. Disinfect the sinks" (72).

These multiple border crossing rites of passage, however, are not narrated in a traditional realist fashion. Rather, the totality of Viramontes's story is scrambled in three separate sections, with each narrating the washerwoman's and the two undocumented Mexican children's shifting, interstitial experiences. The decentered aesthetic structure of Viramontes's text has elicited the most fanciful and controversial attention from literary critics. Sonia Saldívar-Hull, for example, suggests that Viramontes "crafts a fractured narrative to reflect the disorientation that the immigrant workers feel when they are subjected to life in a country that controls their labor but does not value their existence as human beings" (223). Likewise, Barbara Harlow elegantly argues that the political content of Viramontes's text merges (in strong dialectical fashion) with the tale's aesthetic form: "Much as these refugees transgress national boundaries, victims of political persecution who by their very international mobility challenge the ideology of national borders and its agenda of depoliticization in the interest of hegemony, so too the story refuses to respect the boundaries and conventions of literary critical time and space and their disciplining of plot genre" (152). In other words, for Saldívar-Hull and Harlow, Viramontes's experimental "The Cariboo Cafe" challenges both the arbitrariness of the nation-state's borders and the institutionalized mobilizations of literary conventions such as plot structure, space and time; moreover, Viramontes strikingly represents the washer woman confined to what Abdul J. JanMohamed has termed "the predicament of border intellectuals, neither motivated by nostalgia for some

lost or abandoned culture nor at home in this ... culture" (102).

If disjunctive separation, liminality, and reaggregation are the central cultural rituals performed in "The Cariboo Cafe," then it is hardly surprising that rhetorically and tropologically Viramontes relies heavily on prolepsis (flashforwards) and analepsis (flashbacks) to structure the tale. It begins *in media res* with a near-omniscient narrator situating readers about the realities of migrant border crossing separation: "They arrived in the secrecy of the night, as displaced people often do, stopping over for a week, a month, eventually staying a lifetime" (61). From the very beginning, liminality is thematized not as a temporary condition of the displaced but as a permanent social reality.

Given that both of Macky's and Sonya's parents work (undocumented workers are rarely on welfare), the children are instructed to follow three simple rules in their urban galaxy: "never talk to strangers"; avoid what their father calls the "polie," for the police he warned them "was La Migra in disguise"; and keep your key with you at all times—the four walls of the apartment were the only protection against the street" (61).[8] But Sonya, the young, *indocumentada*, loses her apartment key. Unable to find their way to a baby-sitter's house, Sonya and Macky begin their harrowing encounter and orbit with the *frontera's* urban galaxy, what Viramontes lyrically describes as "a maze of alleys and dead ends, the long, abandoned warehouses shadowing any light ... boarded up boxcars [and] rows of rusted rails" (63). Looming across the shadowed barrioscape, "like a beacon light," the children see the sign of "oo" cafe.

Without any traditional transitional markers, section two tells in a working-class (albeit bigoted) vernacular of an Anglo-American cook the lurid story of the undocumented workers' experiences at the Cariboo Cafe, especially those of the washer woman, Sonya and Macky. Situated in the midst of garment warehouse factories where many of the undocumented border crossers labor, the zero zero cafe functions as an apparent safehouse where many of the workers can get away from the mean streets of Los Angeles. On an initial reading, however, it is not at all clear how the brave, new transnational family of the washer woman, Sonya and Macky met, or why they are now together at the cafe. All we know is reflected through the crude testimonial narrative of the manager: "I'm standing behind the counter staring at the short woman. Already I know that she's bad news because she looks street to me ... Funny thing, but I didn't see the two kids 'till I got to the booth. All of a sudden I see the big eyes looking over the table's edge at me. It shook me up ..." (65-66).

Viramontes, of course, shakes things up a bit more by describing another of the underclass's predicament of culture, Paulie's overdose at the cafe: he "O.D.'s" in the cafe's "crapper; vomit and shit are all over ... the fuckin' walls" (67). Not surprisingly, the immense border machine shifts into high gear. "Cops," the cook says, are "looking up my ass for stash" (67), and later on "green vans roll up across the street ... I see all these illegals running out of the factory to hide ... three of them run[ning] into the Cariboo" (67). Given the events of the day, section two ends with the cook telling us: "I was all confused ..." (68).

Having moved through separation and liminality in the first sections, Viramontes's denouement (section three) provides readers with what we may call a phantasmatic folktale of (deadly) reincorporation. Slipping in and out of stream of consciousness derangement, the narrator explains: "For you see, they took Geraldo. By mistake, of course. It was my fault. I shouldn't have sent him out to fetch me a mango" (68). Eventually the washer woman fills in the gaps to the earlier sections: when Geraldo failed to return, she is hurled into the spatiality-time of night, for "the darkness becomes a serpent tongue, swallowing us whole. It is the night of La Llorona" (68).

With this reference to La Llorona, readers familiar with one of Greater Mexico's most powerful folktales, can begin to make sense of the tale's freakish entanglements. Though the washer woman tells us in her own fraught logic how she "finds" Geraldo in Macky ("I jumped the curb, dashed out into the street ... [and] grab[bed] him because the earth is crumbling beneath us" (72)), reader's acquainted with the legend of La Llorona know even as they do not know that the wailing washer woman will surely find her children at the Cariboo Cafe. Thus using and revising La Llorona legend to produce cultural simultaneity in the *Américas* (uniting Central American and North American Borderland [post]colonial history), Viramontes allows us also to hear the deep stirrings of the wailing woman. Recalling the history that the inhabitants of the *Américas* share—a legacy of 500-years of Spanish conquest and resistance—the legend of La Llorona creeps into the zero zero place of Chicana/o fiction: "The cook huddles behind the counter, frightened, trembling ... and she begins screaming enough for all the women of murdered children, screaming, pleading for help" (74). But why is the cook so frightened? Why do males "tremble" in La Llorona's presence?

As anthropologist José E. Limón suggests, La Llorona, "the legendary female figure" that dominates the cultures of Greater Mexico, is a "distinct relative of the Medea story and ... a syncretism of European and indigenous cultural forms" (59). While various interpreters of La Llorona have not accorded her a resistive, utopian, and liminal history (viewing her as a passive and ahistorical creature), Limón systemtacially takes us through what he calls the "genesis and formal definition of this legend," arguing that "La Llorona as a symbol ... speaks to the course of Greater Mexican history and does so for women in particular" (74).

As far back as Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's chronicle of the New World, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, La Llorona, Limón writes, "appeared in the night crying out for her dead children" (68). Moreover, for our purposes, Sahagún's chronicle collected and recorded indigenous Amerindians's narrations telling their tale of loss: "At night, in the wind, a woman's voice was heard. 'Oh my children, we are now lost!' Sometimes she said, 'Oh my children, where shall I take you ?'" (Sahagún cited in Castañeda-Shular 98) In later colonial versions (as reported by Frances Toor), the legend incorporates other forms: a lower class woman is betrayed by an upper-class lover who has fathered her children. She then kills the children and walks crying in the night.[9]

In Limón's utopian reading, La Llorona's "insane infanticide" can be said to be a "temporary insanity *produced historically by those who socially dominate*" (his emphasis 86). Seen in this historical light, that Viramontes's wailing washer woman grieves and searches for her lost child (finding Geraldo in her kidnapping of Macky) is not something that is produced inherently but rather produced by the history which begins with Cortés's conquest of Mexico. If all children of loss in the *Américas* (produced by Euro-imperialism) are also children of need, they are also what Limón sees as potentially "grieving, haunting mothers reaching for their children *across fluid boundaries*" (my emphasis 87). We may now be in a better position to understand why the manager of the Cariboo Cafe is so frightened by the washer woman/La Llorona. In her act of infanticide, La Llorona "symbolically destroys," what Limón argues is "the familial basis for patriarchy" (76).

Nevertheless, in Viramontes's hands, La Llorona/washer woman offers her readers a startling paradox: while her folktale in section three always suggests the symbolic destruction of patriarchy—represented in the washerwoman's fight to the death with the police at the story's end—, there also remains the washerwoman's utopian desire to fulfill the last stage of her territorial rite of passage, namely, her dream of incorporation, or better yet, what Debra Castillo justly calls the washerwoman's "project[ed] ... dream of re-incorporation, of returning her newborn/reborn infant to her womb" (91). Viramontes writes:

> She wants to conceal him in her body again, return him to her belly so that they will not castrate him and hang his small, blue penis on her door, not crush his face so that he is unrecognizable, not bury him among the heaps of bones, of ears, and teeth, and jaws, because no one, but she, cared to know that he cried. For years he cried and she could hear him day and night." (74)

Like Rigoberta Menchú, the exiled Quiché Indian woman who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, the washer woman (even in her abject solitude) finally becomes an eloquent symbol for indigenous peoples and victims of government repression on both sides of the South-North border. When confronted in the zero zero cafe by the Los Angeles Police, "with their guns taut and cold like steel erections" (74), the washer woman resists them to the bitter end rather than unplug her dream of an incorporated, transnational family: "I will fight you all because you're all farted out of the Devil's ass ... and then I hear something crunching like broken glass against my forehead and I am blinded by the liquid darkness" (75).

Our subject here has been the multicultural, intercultural and transnational experiences of migrant border crossers from the South into the North represented as a complex series of traversing and mixing, syncretizing and hybridizing. As both Leo Chávez and Helena Viramontes emphasize in their narratives, migrant Border crossing cultures are often formed under powerful economic and political constraints. Like the Black British diasporic cultures of, say, Stuart Hall (*Identity*) and

Paul Gilroy (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*), U.S. Border cultures share what James Clifford has described as a "two-sidedness, expressing a deep dystopic/utopian tension. They are constituted by displacement "under varying degrees of coercion, often extreme" (6). And as Chávez and Viramontes adamantly argue, migrant Border crossing cultures represent alternative interpretive communities where folkloric and postnational experimental narratives can be enunciated. What is finally remarkable about Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" is that borders—as Barbara Harlow suggested—"become bonds among peoples, rather than the articulation of national differences and the basis for exclusion by the collaboration of the United States and [Central American] regimes" (152). In other words, in Viramontes's "zero zero place" a worlding of world historical events has erupted—from Cortés's Euro-imperialism to Reagan-Bush's wars in Central America—and their coming to the *Américas* was embodied in the haunting, resisting figure of La Llorona. Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" is an emergent multicultural story to pass through the entangled borders of world literature.

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NOTES

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1. Using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's famous concept of the machine in their *Anti-Oedipus.*, Guillermo Gómez-Peña envisioned a radical rereading of the U.S.-Mexico border as an ensemble of desiring machines. See also Emily D. Hicks's "Deterritorialization and Border Writing" (1988).

2. Nancy Fraser's term, "juridical-administrative-state apparatus," echoes Louis Althusser's phrase, "ideological state apparatus," in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation." In general Fraser's JAT can be understood as a subclass of an ISA, and this is how I am using it in this essay.

3. See Jean Franco's superb "Going Public: Reinhabiting the Private."

4. For more on this cultural and legal re-definition of citizenship, see Renato Rosaldo's "Cultural Citizenship: Attempting to Enfranchise Latinos." Rosaldo uses cultural citizenship "both in the legal sense (one either does or does not have a document) and also in the familiar sense of the spectrum from full citizenship to second-class citizenship" (7); he uses the term cultural "to emphasize the local people's own descriptions of what goes into being fully enfranchised" (7). Also relevant here is Gerald P. López's "The Work We Know So Little

About."

5. Even at the mass-mediated level, the national press rarely mentions Latinos/as when discussing race relations and urban problems. As Gerald P. López writes, "when people visualize the goings-on in this country they most often don't even seem to see the 25 million or so Latinos who live here (12)". Thus, it is hardly surprising, López notes, that "we Latinos haven't made it onto some list of nationally prominent folks—in this case, it's 'THE NEWSWEEK 100" of cultural elite ... Having no Latinos on the NEWSWEEK list might not get under our skin were it not so utterly familiar." See López's "My Turn," in *Newsweek*.

6. According to Debra Castillo, "What tends to drop out of sight ... is ... the *Carib*, the indigenous element that waits, another hidden layer of writing on the scratched surface of the palimpsest, the unrecognized other half of the backdrop against which the transients shuffle, and suffer, and die. What remains undefined is the nameless act of violence that has suppressed the *Carib*, as well as the outline of the form the history of its repression might take" (81).

7. As Leo Chávez suggests, "While migrants may not sever family ties, those ties are stretched across time, space, and national boundaries" (119).

8. According to legal scholar Gerald López, "Data strongly suggest that only one to four percent of undocumented Mexicans take advantage of public services such as welfare, unemployment benefits, food stamps, AFDC benefits and the like; that eight to ten percent pay Social Security and income taxes; that the majority do not file for income tax refunds; that all contribute to sales taxes; and that at least some contribute to property taxes" (636). See López's fine monograph, "Undocumented Mexican Migration: In Search of a Just Immigration Law and Policy."

9. Frances Toor, *A Treasury of Mexican Folkways*.

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Down These City Streets: Exploring Urban Space in *El Bronx Remembered* and *The House on Mango Street*

Nicholasa Mohr and Sandra Cisneros exemplify new voices in their respective Latino literary traditions by addressing the topic of urban space from a Latina feminist perspective. Mohr was among the first Nuyorican writers in the 1970s to examine the role of women of Puerto Rican background in their social environment in the United States, specifically New York City. Unlike her Nuyorican male counterpart, Piri Thomas, Mohr observes the space of the home to understand how that ambience influences young girls in public. She does not recover one-dimensional and stereotyped Latina female protagonists in a life of crimes, drugs, and prostitution the way many male writers portray them. Rather, she carefully penetrates the interior worlds of the women who lead ordinary as opposed to escapade lives. She traces how young Nuyorican girls move and cope with obstacles in their urban world in her *El Bronx Remembered* (1975). In a revealing essay "The Journey Towards a Common Ground," Mohr discusses the value of her work in discovering new characters and voices in the representation of Puerto Rican women. She asks:

> Where was my own mother and aunt? And all those valiant women who left Puerto Rico out of necessity, for the most part by themselves bringing small children to a cold and hostile city. They came with thousands of others, driven out by poverty, ill-equipped with little education and no knowledge of English. But they were determined to give their children a better life and the hope of a future. This is where I had come from, and it was these women who became my heroes. When I looked for role models that symbolized strength, when I looked for subjects to paint and stories to write, I had only to look at my own. (83)

Sandra Cisneros, in turn, represents one of the first Chicana writers in the 1980s who speaks to the transitional situation of young Chicana/Latina women who cross

the borders of the domestic sphere into the city streets. Unlike many Chicano male writers before her, Cisneros depicts female protagonists who struggle between the home and the desire to escape that domestic space. Like Mohr, she prefers to illustrate women as people who need to be heard and understood, subjects in their own right. Cisneros also understands a woman's need to realize that she has opportunities beyond those of her home such as a university education. In *The House on Mango Street* (1984), the character of Esperanza becomes aware of her abilities to move through urban spaces physically and symbolically, a new perspective in U.S. Latina literature. What is more important, this female protagonist is breaking boundaries with the patriarchal paradigm set up for young girls within traditional Latino culture. Cisneros pays homage to the woman who wishes to control and organize her own life as well as those who offer a community of emotional support. In a relevant essay "Unveiling Athena," the feminist critic Erlinda Gonzales-Berry points out to the importance of Cisneros' portrait of Chicanas. She states:

> She makes women the central focus of the narrative and presents a firmly centered female protagonist who acts, not as the Other of a male protagonist but, rather, as a subject who dares to confront lies and to deconstruct myths. Mothers and virgins are certainly still present, as are women content in their role of the Eternal Feminine, but these are viewed with a critical eye. Are they the only roles available to Chicanas? What price have women paid for protection and dependency? (43)

Social Context

In *El Bronx Remembered*, Nicholasa Mohr sets her narrative in the post-World War II period when waves of Puerto Rican immigrants began to form Nuyorican communities in the United States. At a crucial moment in Nuyorican history, these Latino migrants discover Anglo-American culture, predominantly European, with much conflict. During this time, most Nuyoricans come from a racially mixed, working-class background, a factor which makes them objects of racial, linguistic, and class discrimination. In addition to feeling unwelcome, Nuyoricans must live in limited housing situations, be they tenements in barrios, Latino neighborhoods, or other forms of cultural spatial boundaries. Segregation serves as a basis for all of Mohr's stories in *El Bronx Remembered*. She addresses a specific place, El Bronx, to recount her stories and show the effects that these living conditions have on Nuyorican people, particularly on women.[1]

While *El Bronx Remembered* is devoted to the different stories of people who form part of the Nuyorican community after World War II, in *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros organizes the voices of the Chicano/Latino community around a central character Esperanza in Chicago of the late 1960s. Like the Bronx

context, the Latino characters in this neighborhood are bilingual, working-class, and primarily young girls at a transitory stage. Historically speaking, different Latino cultures--Chicano, Mexican, Puerto Rican--are coming into contact with each other in the urban space as they move around to find a home during this radical time of the 1960s.[2] Interestingly enough, this cultural history also coincides with the world-wide feminist movements that empowered women. It is no wonder that Cisneros continues to explore this U.S. Latina feminist literary consciousness in an urban context in the 1960s that Mohr had already initiated in the 1940s. Despite the fact that these women authors come from different national backgrounds and histories, they share an interest in the way their female protagonists of Latin American heritage combat similar problems of racism, class conflict and patriarchy in an American city context. Cisneros' and Mohr's texts develop this urban Latina feminist awareness in the young Esperanza and Nuyorican protagonists.

Urban Space

New York City and Chicago are urban areas with large Latino populations. For Nuyoricans, New York City serves as their cultural capital: it provides a sense of home in the mainland. Chicago, on the other hand, represents a crossroads for the two largest Latino cultures, Chicano and Puerto Rican, a place where new cultures are born. In *El Bronx Remembered* and *The House on Mango Street*, the Latina protagonists develop a social consciousness of the urban space as they travel in their respective cities. In both contexts, urban space serves as a landscape for exploration where young girls traverse cultural boundaries from one social milieu to another. On a symbolic level, it also represents the recognition of the female body, a sexual awakening. This process of change alerts the mind (of both the city and the body) to an awareness of gender. In "The Subjects of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism," feminist critic Norma Alarcón explains how women's knowledge and familiarity of the world surrounding them can be understood in conjunction with their race, class and gender identity as women of color. She says, "Through 'consciousness-raising' (from women's point of view) women are led to know the world in a different way. Women's experience of politics, of life as sex object, gives rise to its own methods of appropriating that reality: feminist method" (33-34). In *El Bronx Remembered* and *The House on Mango Street*, the effects of coming of age in the urban space can be captured through the process of moving and coming across new experiences in the public sphere. This movement symbolizes a journey through different social environments that will give young Latinas new visions of their capabilities to transcend social restrictions placed upon them by cultural values, educational authorities, and patriarchal domination. In the three examples, street playing amongst girlfriends, socializing in school, and transforming traditional gender roles, the Latina protagonist (Chicana/Nuyorican) forms a self-awareness of her social role in an attempt to find "a space of her own" in the modern metropolis. According to David Harvey, living quarters within an urban

community can be so intense that people must control a particular space to give themselves a sense of belonging to that geographic area. He says:

> Within the community space, used values get shared through some mix of mutual aid and mutual predation, creating tight but often conflictual interpersonal social bonding in both private and public spaces. The result is an often intense attachment to place and 'turf' and an exact sense of boundaries because it is only through active appropriation that control over space is assured. (266)

The Significance of Movement

In *El Bronx Remembered*, movement becomes an important issue to understand the pubescent experience of young Latina girls in city culture. In "A Very Special Pet," family members face rapid cultural changes as they migrate from "their tiny village in the mountains" (2) in Puerto Rico to the cities in the United States. Mohr describes the transition: "City life was foreign to them, and they had to learn everything, even how to get on a subway and travel" (2). In the urban environment, a Puerto Rican woman encounters problems because she is not accustomed to living in this fast-paced city and culture that differs radically from her small hometown. Mohr offers the example, "Graciela Fernández [the mother] had been terribly frightened at first of the underground trains, traffic, and large crowds of people. Although the mother finally adjusted, she still confined herself to the apartment and seldom went out" (2). This self-imposed physical imprisonment affects her psychologically because she refuses to participate in the daily routine of city life. Yet, the children who gradually familiarize themselves with American culture through media and school will follow a different path from their mother because they will be raised in the Bronx. The young girls become especially aware of the need to explore urban space.

In *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza, a young Latina in the city, experiences several changes by moving with her family from one apartment to another. In the vignette "The House on Mango Street," Esperanza's formative years take place in a very mobile environment. Her parents are in search of the American Dream, to be able to own a house. Since her parents are Mexican immigrants, it is difficult for them to find a stable and adequate home. The protagonist says, "But what I remember most is *moving* a lot. Each time it seemed there'd be one more of us. By the time we got to Mango Street, we were six—Mama, Papa, Carlos, Kiki, my sister Nenny and me" (7, emphasis mine). Like the young girls in *El Bronx Remembered*, the immigrant experience of the parents will affect Esperanza's gender consciousness because she will be raised in an urban environment, a place where one has to know the rules of the game called survival. Consequently, Esperanza must also learn how to defend her own turf to show that she will redefine

the cultural borders placed on her by ignorant outsiders who visit her barrio. She says: "Those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives. They are stupid people who are lost and got here by mistake" (29). In this example, Esperanza challenges the stereotypical prejudices that people may have about the living spaces of working-class Latinos. Instead of having these spatial boundaries imposed on her, the protagonist traverses them to know other neighborhoods in her city.

This experience to find a home serves as a metaphor for another kind of search which is that of her consciousness and her relationship to that space around her. In "A House of My Own," Esperanza defines her space. She says, "Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's house. A house all my own. . . Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after. Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem" (100). She becomes aware of the necessity then to find "a space of her own." The process of traveling through the world of the streets, the school system and the city will awaken Esperanza and other young Latinas to avenues of change and better understanding of their social and gender roles.

The Streets

Mohr and Cisneros invent their Latina female protagonists so that when they establish relationships with their girlfriends in the streets, they develop an awareness of their capabilities to penetrate forbidden zones in the city. In the story "Once Upon a Time. . .", Mohr explores the relationships among a group of three nameless girls who disobey their parents' orders by searching for an appropriate playing field, in other words "a space of their own." Since these girlfriends cannot seem to find a suitable place in their neighborhood, the Bronx, because it is too crowded or they do not belong to a specific turf like the boys in the group The Puerto Rican Leopards, they must settle for a more elevated space, the rooftops of buildings. In traveling this aerial space, these girlfriends find a space of their own. Mohr elaborates: "They walked along the rooftops, going from building to building. Each building was separated from the next by a short wall of painted cement, . . . no higher than three and a half feet. When they reached each wall the girls climbed over, exploring another rooftop" (41). Although their parents, especially the mothers, may have warned these girls about crossing into dangerous areas such as rooftops, the girlfriends experience an exhilarating feeling of freedom, as if they are literally on top of the world. From this angle, they acquire a new perspective on life. The title of the story may remind us of a children's fairy tale being told to learn a moral.. Mohr, nonetheless, expands the meaning beyond children's simple language. She emphasizes the adventure in the story, the daring experience that may only take place "once in a lifetime" in the case of these girls. Instead of learning from what older people may tell them, these youngsters prefer to take destiny into their own hands by evading the rules of the home. The awareness that they are willing to

confront danger face to face assures us that these girls are not the homebodies we thought of them in the beginning of the story. Mohr also calls attention to the importance of female friendship when a young Latina decides to experience independence in the urban environment. This female bonding manifests itself in their street singing, part of an oral tradition, which is the "language of the streets" or "the language of working-class dialogue" (Flores 51). Because of the spatial, economic, and cultural limitations placed on them in the home, these girls must learn to create their own sense of space to survive within the public sphere of the city.

In "Our Good Day" in *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza also develops relationships with girlfriends and crosses prohibited city streets with them. Like the three nameless girls in *El Bronx Remembered*, Esperanza and her new friends, Rachel and Lucy, form a social alliance and collectively purchase a bicycle to ride around their neighborhood. In this story, Esperanza also undergoes a social change because she breaks her relationship with Cathy, Queen of Cats, a girl from a more upwardly mobile social status in exchange for two working-class, Texan Latinas, Rachel and Lucy, who had just migrated north to Chicago.[3] These girlfriends celebrate their freedom when they acquire a bicycle of their own, a mode of transportation that will take them places. This particular investment also makes Esperanza more independent and provides an avenue to travel into unknown spaces she would never have dreamed of otherwise as she enters the danger zone in rapid movement. She says: "We ride fast and faster. Past my house, sad and red and crumbly in places, past Mr. Benny's grocery on the corner, and down the avenue which is dangerous. Laundromat, junk store, drug store, windows and cars and more cars, and around the block back to Mango" (17). The rebellious Esperanza not only leaves her home but she also trespasses the limitations of her street and explores the other streets in her neighborhood. She takes the initiative in traveling to different places with her girlfriends even if it means crossing social restrictions placed upon her. By taking this step, Esperanza becomes an active agent of her life who wishes to become familiar with her social environment and beyond. Cisneros insinuates that young Latina girls should find appropriate wheels if they are going to discover new places in the urban space. Like boys who long to own a car, Esperanza learns to ride a bicycle to show that she too knows how to move around in this modern city. She dives into this transportation culture to avoid the pitfalls of a "sitting by the window" destiny. It is no wonder that for Esperanza and her new girlfriends this experience of owning a bicycle occurs on "our good day." She has found other girls with whom she can identify who are also willing to take risks. This moment symbolizes a beginning in being able to go wherever they desire to venture. From here to eternity, these Latina protagonists have the ability and the means to travel anywhere down the city streets. This movement also signifies a new perspective of space and the ability to develop one's potential when everyone tells Esperanza that she should not bother to leave her home. A motivated figure, she proves that she too can set up her own definition and appropriation of space in the city.

The School System

Mohr and Cisneros also address the school system's role in the formation of young girls' social consciousness. In "The Wrong Lunch Line" in *El Bronx Remembered*, the young Nuyorican protagonist Yvette faces humiliation when a schoolteacher reprimands her for eating with her Jewish friend, Monica. The schoolteacher barks in an authoritative tone: "You have no right to take someone else's place. . . You have to learn, Yvette, right from wrong. *Don't go where you don't belong*" (74, emphasis mine). In this social context, Yvette becomes the victim of class and cultural segregation within the school environment because she free-willingly enters a cultural space different than her own Latino one by disobeying the school authorities. Evidently, Mohr plays with perspectivism in this story. What is "the wrong lunch line" for the school authority, turns out to be "the right lunch line" for Yvette who follows her instincts. This means that Yvette takes the initiative to think for herself and believes in loyalty to her friend Monica who bonds with her in "a space of their own" rather than a space set up by institutional boundaries. The educational authorities prevent these young girls from crossing cultural borders by repressing their natural desires to make friends with children of different cultural backgrounds. In this scene, Mohr vividly captures how the young girls contest the authority of the educational school system. A dehumanizing machine, this institution functions to divide young children into separate physical and cultural spaces, a microcosm of society at large. The cultural divisions that take place within the spatial boundaries of the city definitely influence the young Nuyorican girls' social formation leaving them with limited opportunities to transgress beyond their potentials within the educational system and their social peers. In spite of these setbacks, though, Yvette refuses to play the role of the quiet Latina student. She rejoices with Monica: "'Boy, that Mrs. Ralston sure is dumb,' Yvette said gigglingly. They looked at each other and began to laugh loudly" (75). Within this context, the girlfriends celebrate the last laugh and triumph.

Esperanza also wishes to challenge the school system's authority in "A Rice Sandwich" in *The House on Mango Street*. Reminiscent of Yvette in *El Bronx Remembered*, Esperanza wishes to cross into foreign territory by sitting in the section of the "canteen," an eating place for "special kids" who are allowed to bring their lunch to school. Little does Esperanza realize that the spatial divisions of the school structure leave little room for personal freedom. She explains: "But lunch time came finally and I got to get in line with the stay-at-school kids. Everything is fine until the nun who knows all the canteen kids by heart looks at me and says: *you, who sent you here*? And since I am shy, I don't say anything, just hold out my hand with the letter. This is no good, she says, till Sister Superior gives the okay" (42, emphasis mine). Esperanza not only faces public degradation like Yvette, but she also becomes cognizant of the fact that she does not belong in the line with the canteen kids. The educational authorities, in this case the Catholic Church, do not even care to acknowledge her mother, a poor Latina woman, as an authority figure

because they treat her as if she were invisible. Moreover, this "rice sandwich" represents a different economic element. Esperanza's mother does not prepare her a bologna or peanut butter and jelly sandwich. But instead, she makes use of what resources are available to her. Esperanza says: "Okay, okay, my mother says after three days of this. And the following morning I get to got to school with my mother's letter and a rice sandwich because we don't have lunch meat" (42). Since she comes from a working-class background, she should be treated accordingly. This class and culture conflict transfers into a deep sense of marginalization for a young Latina girl who learns about the injustices of spatial divisions in school, a mirror image of the problems of the urban city. Like Mohr's character in "The Wrong Lunch Line," Esperanza becomes aware of the borders that can impede her from traveling to the other side, a place of restriction but one she must attempt to cross.

Sexuality in the Public Sphere

Transforming traditional gender roles by leaving the domestic space in the discovery of sexuality becomes a significant issue in both texts. Mohr's representation of sexuality in the novella "Herman and Alice" in *El Bronx Remembered* departs from the conventional male perspective because she defines new outlooks for young Latinas regarding choice and circumstance. In *Sobre la literatura puertorriqueña de aquí y de allá: aproximaciones feministas*, the feminist critic Margarita Fernández-Olmos explains:

> Las novelas de ... autoras chicanas y puertorriqueñas, como la mayor parte de las escritoras contemporáneas, incluyen una crítica cultural que no se encuentra normalmente en las obras de autores masculinos: la diferenciación sexual de las funciones sociales de hombres y mujeres, niñas y niños. (120)

Likewise, Mohr shows the need to change the sexual roles of young Latina girls, in this case Alice, who redefine their positions within the family structure. Although the young Nuyorican Alice becomes a teen-age mother leaving her without many choices, she learns from her first sexual experience about the physical meaning of womanhood. Mohr offers an example, "Later that night they met on the stairway leading to the roof. It happened so quickly. She felt nothing except fear and pain. Stevie was drunk and held her tightly. For a moment she struggled to leave, but he covered her mouth with his hand, warning her not to cry or scream because someone may hear them. Alice now found herself crying as she remembered how Stevie forced his way into her" (139). Living under this kind of sexual terror then becomes part of her sexual formation and eventually leads her to be more aware of the physical dangers of being a woman in an urban environment. In this process, Alice not only discovers the trials and tribulations of being a mother, but she also learns about being a woman who needs to know how to protect her body, even from the

intimate people such as her first boyfriend, Stevie. This problem of ignorance arises from cultural values as well. Alice's parents never allow her to be in control of her life. By living sheltered, she never has an opportunity to meet and deal with males personally. She also misses chances to socialize and discover new places to learn about survival in New York, a place that demands knowledge of its geographic space. As a result of this lack of knowledge and experience, she becomes pregnant unexpectedly. However, she marries a homosexual Puerto Rican friend, Herman, a socially marginal figure himself. Even though Alice may yield to the idea of marriage as an institution, she refuses to play the role of the dutiful wife. Her husband acts more like a friend than a domineering husband. Together, they redefine the idea of a traditional patriarchal Latino family where the man dominates. Hence, Alice dares to explore places outside of her neighborhood with Herman. In spiritual bonding, they travel from the Bronx to Manhattan. He says: "She had never been inside the Empire State Building, but she had heard about it from the kids in school" (135). In broadening her scope of New York City, Alice undergoes a social and gender awakening of her potentials to move through the urban space. Though she must deal with the hardships of motherhood at a young age, she discovers new ways to achieve self-fulfillment with Herman.

The characters Marin, Rafaela, and Sally also fall prey to patriarchal domination in *The House on Mango Street*. Like Alice's sheltered life in Mohr's text, they are never allowed to leave the father's home to learn about themselves and their social environment. When they do walk into the public sphere, men take advantage of their naiveté. This sexual exploitation of her girlfriends leads to the formation of a social and feminist consciousness in Esperanza. She later realizes that to be imprisoned at home can have traumatic consequences for young girls once they do step out into the public sphere. In "Red Clowns," she claims: "Sally Sally a hundred times. Why didn't you hear me when I called? Why didn't you tell them to leave me along? The one who grabbed me by the arm, he wouldn't let me go. He said I love you, Spanish girl, I love you, and pressed his sour mouth to mine" (93). While Esperanza is waiting for her friend Sally at a carnival by the "red clowns," boys sexually attack her. This desperate cry for help, for a friend, or for consolation reflects a profound cultural and social critique on the violence of young girls' bodies in the streets. Esperanza realizes that even in a children's world like a carnival, young girls are not safe. Any kind of violation can occur. In this case, the laugh or shout of the red clown corresponds to the screaming and bleeding from rape. Like Mohr, Cisneros defends the education and protection of Latina women's bodies, especially if they have to deal with people who try to invade their private space in the public sphere.

Exploring and "Conquering" the Urban Space

In *The House on Mango Street* Cisneros carries the torch of hope, "Esperanza,"

and liberation from Mohr in order to explore new possibilities for U.S. Latina women in a city environment. In the vignette "The First Job," Esperanza moves beyond her neighborhood to become a young working girl, which is to say an urban explorer. She learns to take public transportation downtown, a different environment, to earn a living. Esperanza must work in order to support her educational costs. She becomes financially responsible at a young age in the real world. She is so insistent on earning her own money that she must lie about her age. She says: "Aunt Lala said she had found a job for me at the Peter Pan Photo Finishers on North Broadway where she worked and how old was I and to show up tomorrow saying I was one year older and that was that" (51). At this new workplace, though, Esperanza becomes aware that she can still be a victim of physical harassment. She speaks of a fellow male co-worker: "he grabs my face with both hands and kisses me hard on the mouth and doesn't let go" (52). When she finds herself in the workforce which tends to provide security, Esperanza must pay the price for being a young vulnerable woman. Even in the workplace, Latina women must be on their guard for any kind of physical harassment. This experience serves as another form of sexual awakening for Esperanza who becomes alert as she crosses new social spaces in the city.

Similarly in "Alicia Who Sees Mice" in *The House on Mango Street*, the young protagonist Alicia travels a distance in the city to receive an education. Esperanza describes her: "Alicia, who inherited her mama's rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university. Two trains and a bus, because she doesn't want to spend her whole life in a factory or behind a rolling pin" (32). Alicia attempts to define her own space by developing her mind. Cisneros demonstrates this progression of Latina consciousness because now she explores the intellectual role of a Latina who has a right to think for herself and dictate the direction of her life. In fact, Alicia becomes a role model for Esperanza to leave the domestic space to acquire "a mind of her own." Alicia's situation, however, remains a bit problematic because she continues to live at home and serves the males in her family almost like a self-sacrificing mother. She must fulfill the domestic duties as well as her academic ones. Cisneros then finds it necessary to create an imaginary as well as a real space for Esperanza by using the notion of the house as a metaphor for space and freedom. What is at stake here may not just be the physical sense of independence for Esperanza, but rather intellectual and psychological freedom from patriarchal domination. In effect, the materialistic independence becomes a symbol for an intellectual development in the conquest of the urban space and the development of her feminist consciousness. She says: "I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate" (82). These feelings of activity, rebellion, and movement have been present in her since she was a child in her home.

A Generation of *Mujeres en marcha*

The experiences of living in urban space for the female protagonists in *El Bronx Remembered* and *The House on Mango Street* provide a new perspective on the representations of the conditions of Chicana/Nuyorican women who form part of a border culture, Latino culture, a special mix of Latin American and Anglo-American. It is important to understand the similar concerns of the Latina protagonists in the different social contexts of these narratives to grasp how they react to different urban factors. While many Latino male authors have concentrated on "the bigger issues" of the Latino immigrant experiences from Mexico and Puerto Rico to the United States, it is just as imperative to study the dynamic experiences of Latina women who migrate within the big cities, New York and Chicago, places that provide a haven for change and growth. The social and feminist approaches I have utilized in this essay serve to bridge the gap between the literary texts of two U.S Latina writers who unite in dealing with issues in the city like street life, school, and sexuality in the public sphere. The common grounds between the Chicana and Nuyorican writers who develop "their feminism on the border, or bridge feminism" (Saldívar-Hull 207) looks at cementing a U.S. Latina literary tradition in the exploration of the urban space. Mohr and Cisneros offer ground-breaking narratives as they develop new visions and possibilities for U. S. Latina women as never shown before in either of their respective literary traditions, a generation of *Mujeres en marcha*.[4]

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NOTES

1. Juan Flores describes the historical context of *El Bronx Remembered* in a conversation with Nicholasa Mohr. He says: "The setting changes from Spanish Harlem during the war (1941-1945) in *Nilda* to the South Bronx of the decade following, from 1945-1956, the years when the migration of Puerto Ricans to New York reached tidal-wave proportions." In an interview with Edna Acosta-Belén, Nicholasa Mohr explains her own personal background, a blend of cultures, in relationship to the historical context and urban space. She says, "My rich heritage as a Puerto Rican, stemming from the Caribbean, Europe and Africa, provides me with source material for a unique interpretation of life in *urban* America (emphasis mine)." Both of these examples demonstrate how dedicated Mohr is to the representation of the Puerto Rican experience in a city environment at a time of social mobilization in history.
2. In the essay, "Ghosts and Voices: Writing from Obsession," Sandra Cisneros discusses the

importance of moving back and forth from Chicago to Mexico City as a youngster reflecting the bicultural experience of many immigrant people in the big cities in a moment in history of rapid modernization. She also stresses the impact that poverty had on her in discovering her unique voice. She poses the question, "What did I know except third floor flats... And this is when I discovered the voice I'd been suppressing all along without realizing it." In another essay, "Notes to a Younger Writer," Cisneros reveals the importance of writing about experiences in places that she knows personally. She says, "I can write of worlds (urban context) they (classmates at Iowa Writing Workshop) never dreamed of, of things they never could learn from a college textbook." In both of these examples, Cisneros like Mohr stresses the value of combining personal with social experience in the construction of reality in literature. All these pieces are contained in a larger essay entitled, "From A Writer's Notebook."

3. The Chicano/Latino movement from the South, Texas, and the island of Puerto Rico to the cities in the North of the United States has roots in other cultural experiences as well. For instance, the African-American novelists Alice Walker and Toni Morrison represent feminist voices who portray the experiences of African-Americans who have migrated from rural to the Northern cities in the twentieth century. In a comparative perspective, Latinas and African-American women share many similar experiences in the urban space because they have also struggled with racism, class conflict, and patriarchy.

4. Nicholasa Mohr and Sandra Cisneros reflect new and conscientious women's voices in U.S. Latina literature who examine the role of young women in a patriarchal society. It is interesting to note that they can almost be considered contemporaries with the leading feminine voices on the other side of the border in Latin American literature. The Mexican Rosario Castellanos in the 1970s and the Puerto Rican Rosario Ferré in the 1980s also emerge in response to a host of issues regarding the "woman question" within their own social contexts: they reconsidered the role of women in culture and society to free them from patriarchal rule.

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La abuela puso al revés el mundo de Joaquín: Representación matrilineal y la nueva mujer chicana

the thread, the story
connects
between women;
grandmothers, mothers,
daughters,
the women
the thread of this
story.
(Alma Villanueva,
"epilogue")

Introducción

Esta última década se caracteriza por la necesidad de inscribir las prácticas culturales que han sido marginalizadas por los grupos hegemónicos o dominantes. La respuesta de los grupos subordinados sobre los que se ha impuesto una coerción o marginalización cultural se ha efectuado subvirtiendo o transgrediendo los valores ideológicos de la cultura hegemónica. Citemos, como ejemplo, el obrar cultural de la comunidad chicana dentro de la sociedad norteamericana para luego analizar la práctica sociohistórica de la nueva mujer/chicana dentro de la comunidad chicana y de la norteamericana.

La comunidad chicana comienza su labor de subversión del discurso hegemónico tanto en las prácticas sociohistóricas concretas (las luchas campesinas, obreras) como en las prácticas escriturales de los manifiestos "Yo soy Joaquín" (1967) y el *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) y en las representaciones del Teatro Campesino. En una evaluación integral de este obrar cultural, estas prácticas se constituyeron en elementos indispensables para forjar la inscripción sociohistórica de los chicanos dentro de su propia comunidad y de la comunidad norteamericana. El sujeto

colectivo chicano intenta subvertir la coerción cultural impuesta por la cultura hegemónica norteamericana y para ello elabora un proyecto de acción política con un culturema semantizado por la propia comunidad que encierra todo un ideario: la unificación por la "raza" (décadas de los 50, 60 e inicios de los 70).

En este proyecto político resulta paradójico que el sujeto chicano reproduzca los mapas patriarcales que trata de subvertir en el grupo hegemónico norteamericano. Por ejemplo, la predicación cultural que recibe la mujer chicana por parte de este sujeto perpetúa la reproducción de los cánones de comportamiento asignados a la mujer mexicana tradicional. El chicano se concibe como "macho" en una evocación de su antepasado mexicano y concibe a la chicana por extensión bajo los mismos parámetros culturales que el mexicano a la mujer mexicana:

> En un mundo hecho a la imagen de los hombres, la mujer es sólo un reflejo de la voluntad y querer masculinos. Pasiva, se convierte en diosa, amada, ser que encarna los elementos estables y antiguos del universo: la tierra, madre y virgen; activa es siempre función, medio canal. (Paz 32)

> La mujer mexicana, como todas las otras es un símbolo que representa la estabilidad y continuidad de la raza. A su significación cósmica se alía la social: en la vida diaria su función consiste en hacer imperar la ley y el orden, la piedad y la dulzura. (Paz 34)

Tanto para Octavio Paz como para el sujeto patriarcal mexicano y por extensión para el sujeto patriarcal chicano el estereotipo de la mujer tiene como eje demarcador la oposición bueno/malo. La mujer/buena es homologada con la madre, la Virgen de Guadalupe, mujer sufrida y consecuente; la mujer/mala es homologada con la primera Eva, con Malintzin, mujer traidora. Esta fuerza de los contrarios en tensión muestra la implantación del paradigma patriarcal con el que se ha predicado sobre el sujeto femenino chicano para perpetuar su sujeción al eje dominante sin considerar los sintagmas ideológicos y sociohistóricos sobre los que la mujer/chicana ha construido su propia representación cultural. Esta mujer se encuentra frente a una doble coerción cultural, la primera impuesta por la cultura hegemónica norteamericana y la segunda por el sujeto masculino patriarcal de su propia comunidad.

La percepción de los alcances de esta doble coerción decide la actuación del sujeto femenino chicano en tres etapas:

(a) confrontar al sujeto patriarcal chicano;

(b) generar estrategias de subversión contra la impronta patriarcal; y

(c) construir su propio sistema de representación cultural considerando la variable: mujer/chicana.

El obrar contestatario de la mujer chicana en las tres etapas mencionadas recibe la influencia de las revoluciones culturales auspiciadas por el sujeto femenino

dentro de la sociedad norteamericana. Estas coinciden con los hechos históricos de las últimas tres décadas.

La primera etapa queda determinada por la toma de conciencia de ser "el otro silenciado". Como Angie Chabram-Dernersesian señala:

> With this gender objectivation, the silenced Other, Chicanas/ hembras, are thus removed from full-scale participation in the Chicano movement as fully embodied, fully empowered U.S. Mexican female subjects. They are not only engendered under malinchismo but their gender is disfigured at the symbolic level under malinchismo, an ideological construct signifying betrayal which draws inspiration from the generic Malinche. (83)

Las chicanas, como estereotipo ideológico del orden patriarcal, deben quedar "sumergidas" dentro de la producción cultural del chicano y su voz debe ser silenciada. En la segunda etapa, el sujeto femenino chicano comienza a gestar sus estrategias para garantizarse un espacio cultural propio con la finalidad de autorizar su propia práctica sociohistórica. Esta segunda generación de chicanas recibe la sanción del sujeto colectivo patriarcal que las acusa de "traidoras" (Malintzin), hecho paradójico al tratarse de un movimiento que auspiciaba la búsqueda de una identidad sociohistórica auténtica por la "raza" y por su "causa". El nuevo discurso de la mujer chicana es segregado de las diversas instituciones encargadas de perpetuar el sistema hegemónico y de garantizar el intercambio entre los miembros dentro de su propia comunidad. La familia impide que la chicana subvierta los roles tradicionales que le han sido genéricamente asignados; la comunidad y el movimiento chicano se encargan de limitar la participación política de la mujer dentro de su proyecto histórico.

Este hecho dio lugar a que la mujer/chicana adopte uno de dos posibles comportamientos, o se asimilaba a la representación cultural que la comunidad chicana le había asignado o inauguraba su disidencia y por lo tanto aceptaba ser relegada al ostracismo por parte de su propia comunidad (Chabram-Dernersesian 83).

Es a partir de la generación de estrategias de resistencia contra la práctica hegemónica que la mujer/chicana comienza a desarrollar dentro de su propia comunidad, se fortalece la necesidad de unificar al sujeto colectivo femenino chicano y de imponer su propia representación cultural dentro de la comunidad. Surge entonces la promoción de un proyecto cultural que tiene como objetivo autorizar históricamente la práctica social del sujeto femenino chicano. Las promotoras de este proyecto son las escritoras y artistas chicanas que por su función de puentes culturales con otros grupos marginalizados tanto de la comunidad chicana como de la comunidad norteamericana, deciden comprometer su producción cultural para construir su identidad y establecer los lineamientos de su coexistencia social. Se produce una respuesta contra los valores tradicionales, contra las formas

de representación cultural asignadas por el eje dominante patriarcal de la comunidad chicana y se autogestionan las propias señas y mapas de identidad mediante la exploración de la representación matrilineal.

El movimiento chicano recibe esta participación como una traición a la "raza" y como prueba de una transculturación; sanciona a la mujer/chicana acusándola de alienada debido a su relación con otros grupos marginalizados de la sociedad norteamericana. La síntesis de la crítica cultural de la mujer/chicana se evidencia en la protesta: "No quiero ser un hombre":

> Ironically, the discourse of exclusion and betrayal, which assisted in displacing Chicanas such as these from the nationalist script of Chicano identity, flourished in a period when Chicanas were questioning their traditional roles, increasing their participation within the political area, and inscribing a budding Chicana feminist discourse and practice. (Chabram-Dernersesian 84)

La nueva mujer/chicana—de acuerdo a Chabram—tiene como objetivo la construcción de su propia representación cultural. Inicia este proceso con la substitución de voces discursivas y con la resemantización de los culturemas patriarcales. Decide la resemantización de Malintzin, la desterritorialización del mítico Aztlán, la deconstrucción del culturema de la familia nuclear y la revalorización de la producción del sujeto femenino chicano no como eje reproductor del sistema patriarcal sino como eje de subversión del mismo. A fines de los sesenta comienza el proyecto de "nueva" acción política e inscripción cultural de esta mujer/chicana, movimiento que se afianza en la década de los ochenta.

La representación matrilineal

> Whenever women gather in circles or in pairs, in olden times around the village well, or at the quilting bee, in modern times in support groups, over lunch, or at the children's park, they tell one another stories from the Motherline. These are stories of female experience: physical, psychological, and historical. (Lowinsky 1)

En su *The Motherline. Every woman's Journey to find Her Female Roots*, Naomi Ruth Lowinsky define la representación matrilineal con la metáfora del "viaje" que realiza cada mujer para explorar sus lazos de parentesco en la raíz femenina de su identidad. Considera que la experiencia femenina es un conjunto de intertextos que producen una determinada memoria histórica. El mérito de su estudio es que en estas historias de las filiaciones matrilineales no se sujeta a la paradigmática de la experiencia femenina (los casos), sino que enfatiza la evaluación ilativa de esta experiencia (estableciendo relaciones temporales, espaciales, y relaciones de tipo causa/efecto).

Sostiene además que esta ilación de la práctica femenina se instala en tres figuras de la estructura matrilineal de parentesco: la abuela, la madre y la hija. Los tres roles corresponden a la figurativización de la antigua y sagrada trinidad femenina que temporalmente genera la conexión entre el presente, el pasado y el futuro, "maiden, mother, and crone" (xvii).

En el caso de la mujer/chicana, la exploración de la práctica matrilineal es parte del proyecto de construcción de su nueva representación histórica. Se trata también del retorno a un espacio en el que se negocia cierta autonomía y cierta distancia con respecto al reticulado patriarcal por el que necesariamente se ha filtrado toda su experiencia sociohistórica. Una de las características más representativas de este proyecto es que el saber cultural de los grupos hegemónicos es subvertido por un saber natural. En la oposición sociolectal natura/cultura, el regreso a "natura" permite la desterritorialización del espacio del padre y la resemantización del territorio social de la mujer dentro de la comunidad.

En la experiencia de la mujer/chicana, la necesidad de generar su propia representación cultural la conduce a la exploración de los roles míticos y prácticos, virtuales y realizados que las chicanas (abuelas, madres e hijas) han adquirido y modulado a lo largo de su peregrinaje histórico por una identidad.

Para la construcción de su espacio cultural, la mujer chicana (la Nueva Chicana) explora la filiación matrilineal con la finalidad de resemantizar su práctica femenina:

> We had to write another story: a mujer (el subrayado es nuestro) story, another discourse from the perspective of the foregrounded chicana.
> We Chicanas had to create our own word, our own cosmos, constructed by "Chicana"—here, sister, woman. (Chabram 86)

Ahora bien, considerando que la escritura—el texto literario—es también el lugar de una memoria que inscribe las prácticas sociohistóricas que insurgen contra la historia oficial, nuestro objetivo será analizar las características de los diversos roles asumidos por la figura de la abuela en ciertas muestras de escritura de la nueva mujer/chicana y establecer el valor que estos roles adquieren para la resemantización de la práctica sociohistórica del sujeto femenino y del sujeto colectivo chicano. La práctica social y familiar de la abuela resulta ser el centro desde donde la nueva mujer/chicana va a predicar sobre los modelos y conductas de su identidad. De igual modo, es desde la experiencia vital de la figura de la abuela que la escritora inicia la resemantización de los valores míticos y tradicionales de su filiación ancestral. La nueva mujer/chicana otorga a la figura de la abuela la competencia para realizar los siguientes roles:

(a) Es Malintzin/Guadalupe. Sincretiza por extensión los roles eufóricos y disfóricos asignados por la cultura hegemónica a la mujer mexicana. La abuela es Tonitzin, Malintzin, la Virgen de Guadalupe y por lo tanto reúne toda la paradigmática

cultural del sujeto femenino de la cultura ancestral.

(b) Es una memoria histórica. Substituye el saber histórico de la cultura oficial por la memoria colectiva del sujeto social.

(c) Es el territorio concreto que substituye al mítico Aztlán. Se constituye en un territorio que desplaza al espacio imaginario de origen creado por el sujeto colectivo chicano.

(d) Es chamán, médico y curandera. Como depositaria del saber-médico tradicional y del saber-mágico de la cultura ancestral, susbstituye al saber-médico occidental.

(e) Es visionaria. Opone un saber ancestral tradicional al saber racional y tecnológico de la sociedad contemporánea.

Todos estos roles también son asumidos por otras figuras femeninas además de la abuela; sin embargo, el rasgo común que unifica a todas las figuras es que se trata de mujeres ancianas y sabias que reciben el reconocimiento del sujeto femenino por la trayectoria histórica de su experiencia vital.

Como observamos, para evitar que la influencia de las prácticas tradicionales del sujeto patriarcal condicionase la producción de un discurso de substituciones y no de resemantizaciones culturales, la nueva mujer/chicana delimitó los culturemas fundamentales que caracterizan al discurso hegemónico y así trató de garantizar el espacio para la inscripción de sus propios culturemas resemantizados.

Si les permiten hablar: las abuelas ponen el mundo al revés

De acuerdo a lo planteado, la escritura de la nueva mujer/chicana se caracteriza por la exploración de la representación matrilineal y por el compromiso con un saber "natural" que le permite trascender el "yo" y el "nosotros" institucionales que han caracterizado la representación política del movimiento chicano ("Yo soy Joaquín", *Chicano Manifesto*). El yo que asume la heroína chicana es por lo general autobiográfico, testimonial, síntesis de una experiencia que deja de ser exclusiva para constituirse en inclusiva de la práctica histórica colectiva. Salazar y Ramírez sostienen:

> Our women heroes do not, however seek superiority and dominance but rather parity and equality of stature, respect and opportunity. Clearly , they are neither the traditional heroes in positions of power nor the traditional heroines whose roles support the heroic achievements of men. (59)

La escritura narrativa y poética de la nueva chicana, trata de enfatizar la oralidad como parte de su percepción de la representación matrilineal. Como establece Lowinsky, la percepción patriarcal es cognoscitiva y abstracta, mientras que la matriarcal es natural y concreta (14); de ahí la justificación del retorno a la oralidad y de la recuperación de la memoria colectiva. Tey Diana Rebolledo en su

artículo "Abuelitas: Mythology and Integration in Chicana Literature", llega a la conclusión que las "abuelitas" no sólo sirven para establecer un vínculo de linaje sino también sirven como un espejo del pasado para la propia escritora. Destaca la función de la figura de la abuela como creadora de un nuevo mito:

> It would seem at first glance that the literature about *abuelitas* would fall into the first stage of conservation: the remembrance of people that need to be recorded and preserved. Yet the importance of heritage and tradition, and the influence of whose who act as transmitters or facilitators, highlights the *abuelita* as a creator and inventor of a new mythos, *Abuelitas* serve not only as a backdrop to heritage but also as a mirror image of the past for the writer herself. (154)

En este sentido, esa imagen del pasado estaría sosteniendo una predicación anterior sobre la mujer/chicana dentro de los cánones del sujeto patriarcal chicano y no funcionaría como parte del nuevo proyecto de inscripción cultural. La métafora del viaje con la que concluye su estudio establece que la filiación con la "abuela" resulta ser un viaje de integración sicológica para la chicana:

> The text itself functions as the thread that links grandmothers and granddaughters. The female hero is about to be born, a heoine in a long line of heroines, nietas and abuelitas fused by a common bond: bloodline and sex. It is the myth of the integration of the female who is both courageous and womanly. (158)

Marta Sánchez en su artículo "Villanueva's poetic I", estudia la relación matrilineal en el poemario *Mother, May I?* de Alma Villanueva y sostiene: "The poetic enterprise of *Mother, May I?* will be to create from concrete experience a personal myth of a "universal" womanhood. As an autobiographical poem, the narrating consciousness of *Mother, May I?* must incoporate both identities of woman and Chicana into the poetic voice" (112).

La triada femenina está representada por las figuras de la madre, la abuela y la nieta. La abuela encarna la filiación con la cultura mexicana y se evidencia—como destaca Sánchez—en su competencia lingüístico-discursiva: la abuela habla castellano:

> my grandmother takes me to the first
> day of school, everyone speaks
> so fast. I can read and count
> in spanish. you can't speak
> spanish here. they don't like
> it and the teacher is fat

and so white
and I don't like her. I run
home and my grandma says I can stay. we
go to the movies and chinatown and shopping.
she holds one side of the shopping bag, I
hold the other. we
pray and dunk *pan dulce* in coffee. we
make tortillas together. we
laugh and take the buses
everywhere [...] (*Mother, May I?* 9)

En oposición al rol eufórico de la abuela, la madre ausente desempeña un rol disfórico para la hija. Como señala Rebolledo "[i]t is interesting to note that mothers do not as often appear as favorably as *abuelitas* in the eyes of their daughters" (149). El rol de la madre es figurativizado como disfórico debido a que se trata de un sujeto en conflicto, de un sujeto "puente" con la cultura hegemónica norteamericana y con el sujeto patriarcal chicano:

my mother was beautiful.
she smelled good.
she put perfume on her panties
and her legs were smooth. they
sounded funny but they
felt slippery.
she had lots of boyfriends.
lots.
my mother was beautiful.
sometimes I slept in the kitchen
on chairs so
he could sleep with her.
sometimes I kissed her just like
he did.
she was always going away
with one of *them.*
she was always beautiful
for *them.* (*Mother*, 8)

Para Norma Alarcón (1990), este tratamiento de la figura de la madre resulta ser un cuestionamiento ideológico ambivalente y contradictorio:

> Tomando en cuenta [el] marco socioeconómico, las escritoras han venido revelando una actitud ambivalente y contradictoria con respecto a la figura de la madre. Por un lado se la ve como una

> mujer trabajadora que se ha sacrificado en los campos y en las fábricas para sostener a la familia; pero por otro, al entenderla como encargada de la trasmisión de patrones culturales tradicionales, ella traiciona los intereses de la hija o la abandona a que se abra paso por sí misma y solitariamente en un ambiente sumamente hostil para la mujer de color. (210-11)

Recordemos que la hostilidad del medio contra la nueva mujer/chicana no sólo se produce por el prejuicio étnico y racial, sino que sobre todo se debe al prejuicio sexista de su propia comunidad. Esta coerción hace que la escritora evalúe el rol de la madre como una intrusión en la búsqueda de su propio espacio de representación cultural:

> It was inevitable
> mother
> that we should end up
> hating each other
> I could never
> compete
> with the smell of
> male
> constant
> in your nostrils.
>
> You ran away
> in search
> of perfect
> happiness.
>
> I stayed
> cuddled in the
> dreams
> of perfect motherhood. (Herrera-Sobek, "Inevitable Outcome" 75)

Lowinsky señala que la presencia de la "abuela" es indispensable para la intervención de la vieja/sabia en la deliberación de los conflictos entre la madre y la hija: "When mother and daughter fly into their polarized viewpoints, grandmother conciousness provides the integrating third viewpoint, honoring differences, valuing both sides, seeing the struggle as part of an impersonal pattern of female development" (117).

En el caso de la escritura de la nueva mujer/chicana, la madre reproduce y perpetúa muchos de los valores del grupo patriarcal en oposición a la abuela que concreta y simbólicamente realiza una práctica sociohistórica más contracultural y

subversiva. Ello se evidencia, por ejemplo, en el ensayo de carácter testimonial de J. Oshi Ruelas:

> Mi abuela, como mis padres, no se graduó de la escuela secundaria. Sin embargo, era muy ambiciosa. Vino a los Estados Unidos por su cuenta y comenzó su propio negocio—un restaurante en el pueblo fronterizo de Mexicali. Tuvo mucho éxito con su negocio y le gustaba trabajar ahí. Como era una mujer de negocios, confrontó muchas críticas de su familia. Nuestra familia creía que la mujer pertenecía al hogar. Ambas nos habíamos desviado de sus reglas y normas y habíamos seguido distintos caminos, aun cuando ello significó separarnos de nuestras familias. Mi abuela aprendió sola la mayor parte de las cosas que sabía porque mi bisabuela no podía pagarle la escuela. Mi abuela valoraba la educación y sentía que era la única cosa que ella habría querido tener cuando de joven. Ella me inspiró el amor por aprender, algo que siempre he mantenido. (23-33)[1]

Pero también, en oposición a la figura de la madre, la de la abuela representa para la nueva mujer/chicana la primera relación intensa que procura protección y estabilidad emocional y que además conlleva la misión de iniciar a la nieta en las diversas instancias de socialización temprana. La intensidad de la integración entre la abuela y la nieta trasciende la desaparición física—la muerte—de la abuela que simbólicamente establece su residencia en el imaginario de la nieta:

> Here we are
> You and I
> together again
> seeing each other
> through a cloud
> of memories.
>
> You
> half here
> half there
> Me trying to close the bridge
> between the two. (Herrera-Sobek, "Together again" 58)

Otro ejemplo de esta intensidad e integración entre las figuras de la abuela y de la nieta se encuentra en el poema en prosa "to Jesus Villanueva, with love" de Villanueva. La característica más destacable de este texto es la marca de oralidad que intencionalmente genera la simulación de un pacto autobiográfico con el lector:

my first vivid memory of you
mamacita,
we made tortillas together
yours, perfect and round
mine, irregular and fat
we laughed
and named them: oso, pajarito, gatito [...] (*Bloodroot* 52)

Otra característica matrilineal que establece el discurso literario de la nueva mujer/chicana, es la necesidad de reescribir los mitos que provienen de la cultura ancestral. Como describe Chabram-Dernersesian (84), la nueva chicana trata de reemplazar el discurso del compadre y del carnal por el de la comadre y el de la hermana; los mitos ancestrales en los que se asocia a la madre/hermana serán entonces vueltos al revés y resemantizados. El mito de La Malinche y las variantes del mito de la Llorona plantean los temas de la tradición oral que tratan sobre el sujeto femenino desde la perspectiva del enunciado patriarcal y son retomados para proponer la reinterpretación del mestizaje cultural y establecer una correlación con el conflicto contemporáneo de ser mujer/chicana:

5.
The woman shrieking along the littered bank of the
Río Grande is not sorry. She is looking for revenge.
Centuries she has been blamed for the murder of her
child, the loss of her people, as if Tenochtitlan
would not have fallen without her sin. History
does not sing of the conquistador who prayed
to a white god as he pulled two ripe hearts
out of the land. (Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Malinchista, A Myth Revised" 17)

Norma Alarcón (1983, 182) señala que en relación a los mitos ancestrales, las escritoras se han encargado de analizar la predicación que han recibido desde los grupos dominantes. Alarcón presenta la polémica cultural creada en torno a La Malinche como culturema de estado cero al que cada grupo se ha encargado de asignarle una identidad.

En muchos textos la abuela va a asumir el rol de Malintzin (Malinche) como generadora de la insurrección femenina contra la predicación patriarcal. La figura de la abuela también va a permitir el desafío de los valores ideológicos tradicionales al tratar culturemas cerrados o tabús como el incesto:

But tonight my scorpion blood boils
with the heat of the lion—
my half-cousin of fire,

my Aztec brother—
and you are conceived, hija,
from the worm of incest. (Gaspar de Alba, "Letters from a Bruja" 46-47)

Hemos planteado que el discurso que representa la filiación matrilineal se caracteriza por la presencia de las marcas de oralidad. Estas marcas permiten la creación del efecto de realidad atribuible al hecho autobiográfico, enfatizando el aspecto testimonial. En el plano de la expresión de los textos, los rasgos se distinguen por las presencia de demarcadores lingüísticos pronominales (el eje yo/tú) y por la simulación de un dialogismo intratextual. La importancia de la tradición oral, al ser considerada por la institución literaria como parainstitucional[2] (otro mecanismo subversivo utilizado por la mujer/chicana), es que permite recuperar el referente ancestral y asegurar la continuidad de la memoria histórica. Como depositaria de un "saber ancestral", la abuela es portadora de un conocimiento colectivo que la autoriza para "hablar" en nombre del sujeto chicano. En este sentido, sus relatos proporcionan a la mujer/chicana la estabilidad sicológica y sociológica que garantizan la percepción de una identidad homogénea (caso opuesto al de la madre puesto que ella representa el elemento disociador y además enfático de una identidad híbrida). En el poema "Susana" de María Herrera-Sobek, se observa la descripción de la abuela como contadora de historias, historias que constituyen la memoria del sujeto femenino chicano:

I'll tell the birds
Each morning when I wake
That you were here
Smiling at the dawn.
I'll tell the butterflies about your stories
Your endless tales
Of horses, river streams, and mountain pines
Of your dark heroes flying in the night
To fight the battles
That brought the morning sun. (56)

La escritura de la nueva mujer/chicana desterritorializa al mítico Aztlán predicado por el Joaquín del sujeto patriarcal y lo substituye por un territorio—un cuerpo—real y concreto. El cuerpo de la abuela se convierte en "madre tierra", "matriz" y "lugar de origen":

I wind stories in your native
tongue to frighten you
but the only fear here is mine:
that innocence, that imagination
brewing me to pieces.

I am the land you left behind, little girl,
shadow of my shadow. (Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Letters from a Bruja")

Finalmente, el saber natural de la abuela presenta dos roles que tienen como origen la fijación de la práctica cultural ancestral: la abuela es chamán (¿a?), médica curandera y visionaria. Se sustituyen los órdenes de conocimiento racional de la cultura hegemónica por el conocimiento natural de la "madre tierra". Además de asignarle el rol de restauradora del equilibrio ecológico y de la reconciliación de la mujer con la natuleza, la figura de la abuela recibe un poder sobrenatural de carácter mágico. Rebolledo escoge el poema "Abuelita Magic" de Pat Mora para ilustrar este aspecto:

The new mother cries with her baby
in the still desert night,
sits on the dirt floor of the two-roon house,
rocks the angry bundle
tears sliding down her face.

The *abuelita* wakes, shakes her head,
finds a dried red chile,
slowly shakes the wrinkled pod
so the seeds rattle
ts.ss,ts.ss.
the *abuelita*
ts.ss,ts.ss.
gray-haired shaman
ts.ss,ts.ss.
cures her two children
ts.ss
with sleep. (33)

En este mundo al revés, la "abuela" es para la nueva mujer/chicana el cuerpo real que reemplaza al territorio mítico, la memoria colectiva y el saber ancestral que reemplazan a la historia oficial y al saber tecnológico que caracteriza al mundo contemporáneo. El saber médico tradicional de la abuela substituye al saber médico occidental, así como su práctica mágica desafía el racionalismo del grupo patriarcal.

El rol que consideramos de mayor trascendencia para establecer una primera evaluación de la representación matrilineal que genera la nueva mujer/chicana en su escritura es convertir simbólicamente el cuerpo de la abuela en el "territorio de origen". De esta forma, desplaza la obsesiva y abstracta metáfora del cuarto propio que caracteriza el espacio imaginario de otros proyectos feministas y lo sustituye por un espacio concreto y dinámico. El cuerpo de la abuela es el lugar de origen y de inscripción de un cúmulo de experiencias vitales (biológica, sicológica,

sociológica, histórica) que sólo pueden ser experimentadas por el sujeto femenino.

La fijación de la abuela como figura a partir de la cual la nueva mujer/chicana resemantiza su identidad dentro de la escritura, evidencia la preocupación de este sujeto por gestionar una memoria matrilineal que inaugure su disidencia de las predicaciones patriarcales impuestas por los dos grupos que han coercionado su práctica cultural: la sociedad norteamericana y el sujeto patriarcal chicano. El alcance cultural de la propuesta—más allá de la substitución y resemantización de los esterotipos patriarcales—representa la respuesta histórica de la mujer/chicana que no sólo aspira a integrar al sujeto femenino chicano sino que—y sobre todo—decide representarse a partir de su memoria matrilineal.

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NOTAS

1 La traducción es nuestra.

2 Para nuestro estudio la "literatura parainstitucional" es la que reúne los discursos literarios no reconocidos como tales por la institución literaria.

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Self-Baptizing the Wicked Esperanza: Chicana Feminism and Cultural Contact in *The House on Mango Street*

> A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer as well as inner—it's a step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes... The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.
>
> -Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*

Chicanas live on several of society's literal and metaphorical borders. Because of their location in the geopolitical and cultural "borderlands," many critics try to "read" Chicanas as opposed to borders—in principle. Frequently, people do not recognize that the political stances of Chicanas are a consequence of their self affirmation, of situations in which they recognize and create "active" and "reactive" selves. Postmodern theorists of identity, for instance, incorrectly read Chicana identity as constantly in flux endlessly deconstructing the very notion of a unitary social and political location. Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* demonstrates an approach to identity which allows the main character, Esperanza Cordero, to name herself with the seemingly same name she was given during the process where she creates a progressive identity. Esperanza balances past and present where she negotiates history and culture; her relationship to both is a fluid and progressive notion of Chicana identity.

Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* illustrates Chicana action and reaction through Esperanza's experiences, which allude to experiences the reader may have in common with the text. A close reading of Esperanza's stories reveals that the references are not as important as the speaker's relationship with the references. Cisneros uses intertextuality to recognize "worlds," construct her "world's" community and to resist other "worlds." Moments in *The House on Mango Street* where a reader recognizes an allusion is a moment of cultural contact where one of the reader's "worlds" has overlapped with one of the text's "worlds." When a reader recognizes an allusion she or he can identify the borders of her or his "world" and the text's character's "world." *The House on Mango Street* describes the story of a young Chicana named Esperanza who grows up in a Chicana/o working-class neighborhood of Chicago. Within the vignettes Esperanza describes her experiences and observations. Those experiences intertextually refer to other aspects of her life and community. Several of Esperanza's experiences are commonly recognized as allusions, for example, the vignette "A House of My Own" with Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Esperanza's name can be recognized as an allusion to an overt process of negotiating various components of one's life through languages that cross geopolitical borders. Cisneros uses her experiences for culturally specific purposes of self-identification and empowerment, and out of Esperanza's personal experiences come a Chicana feminism and a theoretical blueprint for cross cultural analysis. Both a Chicana feminism and cultural contact are illustrated in Esperanza's self-labeling. To self-label articulates one's recognized social location and developed interests.

Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* demonstrates Chicana identity through Esperanza's self-labeling process, one that implicitly resists postmodern notions of identities. In his essay "The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition," Satya P. Mohanty not only provides a critique of postmodern theories of identity but provides an alternate account of identity he calls "realist-cognitivist." Mohanty's account engages "the relationship among personal experience, social meanings, and cultural identities" (42); ultimately, he claims that the speaker's "new [or newly articulated] feminist cultural and political identity is 'real' in the following sense: it refers accurately to her social location and interests" (70). As Esperanza explores her "worlds" and the "worlds" around her she can recognize her social position and develop her interests. Mohanty articulates a process where identity is both constructed and "real," this theory better recognizes, and discursively allows for, Chicana agency. The endless postmodern "flux" is not inherent in Chicana identity; rather, it is ingrained in the relationship between a reader and a text where the reader cannot define the text by his or her specific terms. This parallels the difference between a person identifying herself and when she is identified by others.

Mohanty directly critiques postmodern notions of identity that would label Chicanas as political oppositions in a constant revolutionary flux. Since Mohanty develops a more accurate way to discuss identity than essentialist and postmodernist

accounts, he provides a framework that allows one to theoretically understand María Lugones' essay and Esperanza's process of identity. Esperanza does not try to escape Chicana culture, nor is she willing to remain within static cultural frameworks. While Mohanty describes the recognition of one's social location and development of her interests he utilizes the language "her world" (49). This language of "worlds" is the crux of María Lugones' ideas in her essay "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling and Loving Perception." Unlike Mohanty's direct critique of postmodern notions of identity, Lugones discusses identity from her own perspective, a traditionally marginalized Chicana. Lugones "[comes] to consciousness as a daughter and . . . as a woman of color" (390). As she works with the complexities of pluralistic feminism she states and demonstrates the process of self-affirmation and the interaction of various cultures, or "worlds." *The House on Mango Street* depicts this process. Mohanty navigates through accepted theories of identity that pre-label marginalized "worlds" as creating a revolutionary flux. Lugones implicitly utilizes Mohanty's theory in her method of self-labeling and consciousness raising. Mohanty's and Lugones' analyses create a more accurate account of identity and provide a better way to read Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street.*

María Lugones' essay allows us to speak of "redefinitions" as moments of cultural, or "world," contact and illuminates the active aspect of these Chicana feminists' projects. Not only does María Lugones' essay implicitly demand a feminist reading of *The House on Mango Street*, but her concept of "'world'-traveling" provides a way to express what appear to be "allusions" as moments of cultural (or "world") contact. She conceptualizes "worlds" as a metaphor that illustrates Latinas' social position as consisting of multiple components or influences. Rather than a postmodern description which only allows Chicana voices to serve political and theoretical purposes as part of a "flux" in the status quo, Lugones creates a framework in which she can locate Chicana feminist theories in personal relationships. Lugones uses her relationship with her mother to initially articulate "world" differences. She then defines or describes these differences when she establishes her "worlds" metaphor. Lugones states:

> I do not want the fixity of a definition because I think the term is suggestive and I do not want to lose this. A "world" has to be presently inhabited by flesh and blood people. That is why it cannot be a utopia. It may also be inhabited by some imaginary people. It may be inhabited by people who are dead or people that the inhabitants of the "world" met in some other "world' and now have in this "world" in imagination. (395)

Lugones uses her concept of "worlds" to develop "'world'" in order to see how she and others simultaneously occupy a multiplicity of "worlds" while they simultaneously maintain their central "world." In addition, "'world'" is a skill where one

can act within "worlds" that may not be hers. A Chicana is the intersection of her "worlds," a "world" of intersections. Some "worlds" are Chicana, woman, New Mexico, all of which are experienced simultaneously, not exclusively. When Lugones describes to her mother's "worlds" she must try to "see" reality through the eyes of a woman from Argentina. She properly "'world'-travels" when she is "at ease" in another "world." There are four ways Lugones says one can be "at ease in a 'world'": to be a fluent speaker in that "world," to be normatively happy in the "world," to be humanly bonded in that "world," and to have a shared history with other people in that "world." In her narrative, Esperanza tries to feel "at ease" with certain components of her identity. When she recognizes her "world" she senses that her "emotions" are legitimate. In Cisneros text, for her to feel "at ease" implies that young Esperanza must identify her own "worlds," at times by first identifying other dominant "worlds." Only then can Esperanza construct herself and recognize her "real" identity.

In order to recognize Esperanza's identity, a reader should first recognize her or his own "worlds." We can recognize a "world" by identifying its border. Our selection of what qualifies as an "allusion" (as opposed to that which we have not experienced or recognized in Cisneros' text) helps illustrate our own "world." What appears to be an "allusion" is merely where one of the reader's experiences intersects with the speaker's. In Cisneros' text, self-labeling illustrates Esperanza's process of empowerment. Within each of these components of the process are what readers from "worlds" other than Esperanza's may refer to as "allusions." By first understanding the process of empowerment, we can then see how those experiences, would-be "allusions," function. Rather than allusions, which trivialize the references as Cisneros' attempt to make a statement, the references are another component in Esperanza's identity and process of empowerment. In Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza Cordero not only illustrates how naming herself with her grandmother's name is progressive, but that in the (Chicana feminist) process Esperanza gains agency as she better understands her personal relationships to social and cultural meanings.

Self-Labeling and Self-Baptism

> While I advocate putting Chicana, tejana, working-class, dyke-feminist poet, writer-theorist in front of my name, I do so for reasons different than those of the dominant culture. Their reasons are to marginalize, confine and contain. My labeling of myself is so that the Chicana and lesbian and all the other persons in me don't get erased, omitted or killed. Naming is how I make my presence known, how I assert who and what I am and want to be known as. Naming myself is a survival tactic.
>
> Gloria Anzaldúa, "To(o) Queer the Writer"

The distinction made in Anzaldúa's epigraph above between being labeled and self-labeling is the same distinction between one's marginalization and the survival of each component of one's self. Anzaldúa later summarizes this distinction as, "La persona está situada *dentro de la idea en vez del reves"* (*InVersions* 252, her italics). In *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza counters the fragmenting effects of osmotic labels and split subjectivities. The section "My Name" may seem like an allusion to the history of Esperanza's family, but it represents a label imposed from one "world," not necessarily by the matrilineal past, onto another where two "worlds," the family's past and present, overlap and inform each other. Names not only remind you who you are in your family context, but when your name originates from a seemingly "foreign" language it also reminds you of your "foreign" status. Her great-grandmother's name has various connotations which Esperanza receives mostly through osmosis. As a first or second generation Chicana in Chicago, Esperanza is part of at least two "worlds" to which her grandmother does not belong. Because these connotations do not encompass all of Esperanza's selves, they split her "real" subjectivity. Esperanza does not want to deny the name, she wants to "baptize myself" (11). At baptism the Catholic child receives a saint's name in addition to her other names. That saint becomes her patron saint. In *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza becomes her own patron saint. After Esperanza recognizes her Chicana experiences, her self-label(s) add components to her name to solidify her subjectivities, not reducing any one to another. Esperanza recognizes how imposed labels reveal other "worlds'" constructions of her; then she labels herself and transforms "Esperanza." By analyzing the initial "Esperanza" and the transformed "Esperanza" we can better understand how the initial discussion of the family's past matrilineal "world" is a moment when two "worlds," Esperanza's and her great-grandmother's, intersect.

In "My Name," Esperanza discusses how she inherits her great-grandmother's name. Esperanza says, "I am Esperanza" instead of, "my *name* is Esperanza." The former signifies Esperanza's internalization of other people's labels, the latter would allow Esperanza to maintain a distance, or gap, with which she can defend and free herself. This "gap" arises because of contradictions between her actual experiences and labels imposed on her. This same "gap" can exist between different "worlds." In English, Esperanza's name sounds to her like "tin" and "painful" (11), whereas in Spanish her name is "too many letters," "sadness," and "waiting" (10). As an individual born in the United States with a Spanish name, "Esperanza" has multiple connotations. In English "esperanza" literally translates as "hope" and in Spanish the name carries with it family stories and traditions of her Mexican great-grandmother's life. When she observes her contemporary friends' domestic entrapment, Esperanza openly refuses the place by the window that her name may traditionally mean: "I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window" (11).

In the vignette "The House on Mango Street," we immediately see Esperanza labeled, euphemistically, by the nun:

> Where do you live? she asked.
> There, I said pointing up to the third floor.
> You live there?
> *There.* I had to look to where she pointed—the third floor, the paint peeling, wooden bars Papa had nailed on the windows so we wouldn't fall out. You live there? The way she said it made me feel like nothing. *There.* I lived *there.* I nodded. (5)

Later, Sister Superior mistakes a run-down house as Esperanza's, who does not correct her. When the nuns mislabel Esperanza's home as poor, they simultaneously mislabel her. Esperanza feels like "nothing"; in those nuns' eyes Esperanza is what they construct her as: a working-class Chicana. Later, in "Geraldo," a person without a home and a name, in effect an individual not labeled by the dominant culture through "legal" immigration documentation, is cut off from all "world" ties. Geraldo's life intersects with Esperanza's through Marin's story of her dance with Geraldo. As quickly as Esperanza encounters Geraldo's story, he leaves. Just as the nun's incorrect label excludes some of Esperanza's components, Geraldo's "no name" isolates and marginalizes the entire individual. Esperanza tells us that she feels like nothing; she implicitly recognizes split subjectivities and senses that people in positions of power (miss)label others.

For women of color, race and gender is split and labeled separately by outside communities. Esperanza encounters gendered "worlds" and forced separation with the ability of men of color to define women within their respective culture when she describes her grandmother's Mexican culture, "Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong" (10). The men of color label women's strength as "bad." Esperanza reveals her recognition of Cathy's different ethnic "world" when Lucy and Rachel, two Chicanas, react to her name, "but when I tell them my name they don't laugh" (14). The "but" distinguishes the girls' reaction from the one to which Esperanza is accustomed. Esperanza recognizes two "worlds," Cathy's "world" and Lucy and Rachel's "world," and she decides that she feels more "at ease" in the young Chicana working-class "world" that she shares with Lucy and Rachel.

Esperanza investigates nicknames. Meme Ortiz's name, according to Esperanza, is "Juan." Esperanza calls him "Meme," what he labels himself. Meme's dog has two names, one in Spanish and one in English. Esperanza emphasizes the dog's ability to have two names over the actual names, which she never states. The characters refer to the dog as "the dog with two names." The stories resonate with the same bilingualism which creates the gaps Esperanza explores in her own name. Not only does Esperanza's grandmother's name come from a past generation, but it is also from México, the same differences between Meme and his mother. Esperanza recognizes her friends' multitude of names and nicknames only to be frustrated with her own labeled self, "I am always Esperanza" as opposed to "Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny" (11). Esperanza

wants to baptize herself to give herself more names. Just as her friends have different names depending on whether or not they are in school, at home, or playing with friends, Esperanza also wants all her various components to be recognized. Esperanza either wants to create more names or add more liberating components to her name, a name like "Zeze the X." Esperanza wants to baptize herself and place the sacred ability, and its power, within herself. The sign of Esperanza's baptism will be her self-labeled name.

In order to baptize herself under a new name, Esperanza must first understand the labeling process. Esperanza recognizes early in the text that she feels uncomfortable when the nuns position her; she later recognizes that "worlds" label according to their respective experiences. In "Those Who Don't," Esperanza sees the scared strangers in her neighborhood. These "strangers" in her community fear the faceless, unnamable, threats that Esperanza's neighbors represent. Esperanza simply discusses these fears as ridiculous when she names and describes the people in order to contextualize the fears born out of skeleton stereotypes:

> But we aren't afraid. We know the guy with the crooked eye is Davey the Baby's brother, and the tall one next to him in the straw brim, that's Rosa's Eddie V. and the big one that looks like a dumb grown man, he's Fat Boy, though he's not fat anymore nor a boy. (28)

Esperanza effectively counters the way the strangers construct her neighbors as she connects them to each other and personal experiences. However, she then describes how she constructs other "worlds." This transition illustrates Esperanza's recognition that she perceives others the same way others perceive and construct her. She recognizes herself as a labeler and not just the labeled. Esperanza then begins to label several objects.

In "Darius & the Clouds," Esperanza associates the sky and clouds to her name, "You can never have too much sky. You can fall asleep and wake up drunk on sky, and sky can keep you safe when you are sad" (33). The sky is a sense of hope, or *esperanza*. Esperanza then admires Darius who points to the sky full of clouds and he says, "You all see that cloud . . . That one next to the one that look like popcorn. That one there. See that. That's God, . . . God, he said, and made it simple" (34). In this section Darius names the sky sacred, God. Esperanza associates her name with the sky, and approves Darius' declaration of holiness for the sky; she begins to baptize herself by giving her name new meanings. Immediately following, Esperanza begins to label the clouds. She labels the sky as hope and holy. Since her name is Esperanza, "hope," she equates herself to the power of the sacred through the labels.

In "And Some More," the children discuss how Eskimos have thirty names for snow. As the Chicanas realize that they only have two, clean and dirty snow, we see how Esperanza and her friends name objects on the basis of their personal experiences. "Shaving cream" cloud, "pig-eye" cloud, and "like you combed its

hair" cloud are all reminiscent of the way in which experiences inform Esperanza's "reading" of the children in her neighborhood that scare the strangers. In both vignettes, Esperanza reveals how people's experiences, ignorance included, determine labels. The children then move from merely naming clouds to concurrently naming themselves, simultaneously positioning themselves as sacred and as self-labelers: "Names for clouds? Nenny asks, names just like you and me" (36). For the remainder of the vignette, children's names intersect the discussion of the clouds until the end of Lucy and Esperanza's bickering and name (label) calling when Esperanza asks, "Who's stupid?" and the vignette finishes with "Rachel, Lucy, Esperanza, and Nenny" (38). They are stupid for trying to define, name or label each other and limit each other's imaginations. As Anzaldúa indicates in the epigraph, to place labels on another marginalizes her, unlike self-labels which empower each component of one's self.

Another component in the process of self-labeling is Esperanza's recognition of the word "bad" and how people construct her as "bad." Throughout the text people, the nuns, her friends and herself, label Esperanza "bad," evil. She subverts the word in order to resist being "bad." Esperanza reflects on her father's opinion of "bad," "Papa said nobody went to public school unless you wanted to turn out bad" (53). One vignette later, in "Born Bad," she tells us she and her friends mimicked her Aunt Lupe. Esperanza says that she "was born on an evil day . . . because of what we did to Aunt Lupe" (58). However, as Esperanza acknowledges her condemnation and construction by other "worlds" as "bad," she also begins to make the word mean more and people's ability to label someone as "bad" mean less. Esperanza discusses her Aunt Lupe: "I don't know who decides who deserves to go bad. There was no evil in her birth. No wicked curse. One day I believe she was swimming, and the next day she was sick" (59). The question of who deserves to be "bad" is twofold. Up until this point, "bad" refers to Esperanza's break from static and oppressive traditions. She successfully questions others' authority to label her and subverts the word by using its other meaning, poor health. After reading the word one recognizes that Esperanza does not speak of evil but of her aunt's illness. Even though Esperanza says she is bad, she is following her Aunt Lupe's advice and writing—like a "good" girl who listens to the elder women. Esperanza removes the connotation of evil from "bad," implicitly removing evil from her sacred self. The same shift in meaning occurs in "Beautiful & Cruel." Esperanza has been labeled as ugly by most of society, yet she speaks confidently, like the "pretty" Nenny, without having to cater to the whims of society. She refuses the labels. Cisneros titles the vignette "Beautiful & Cruel" instead of "Ugly & Timid;" Esperanza's "cruelty" is that which makes her beautiful to herself. She reverses the genders of a common idiom, "I have decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and c*hain*"(88; emphasis mine). The man restrains, weighs down, Esperanza, a woman, from moving to be free.

Finally, in "Three Sisters," one of the comadres asks Esperanza, "What's your name, . . . Esperanza, I said" (104). For the first time Esperanza makes no

apologies for her name nor does she express desire for another. She identifies her name as "Esperanza." At this point she has begun to recognize the complexity of herself and the possible connotations in her name. We, as readers, can know that Esperanza finally approves of her own name because she is constantly amazed that the comadres can know how Esperanza feels. "Esperanza ... a good good name" (104). As Gloria Anzaldúa asserts, adjectives are used to "marginalize, confine and constrain" (*InVersions* 250). These imposed limits reveal how those "worlds" construct individuals. In contrast, Anzaldúa labels herself for survival, "so that all the other persons in me don't get erased, omitted or killed" (251). Finally, Anzaldúa suggests that many scholars misread aspects of Chicana literatures as upholding stereotypes, "[f]requently people fail to see the radicalness of presenting traditional scenarios" (254). At the end of the text, Esperanza labels herself "Esperanza." She uses the name given to her so she can maintain her ties with her matrilineal past "worlds" and include present "worlds'" meanings which were previously excluded: a radical, non-individualistic gesture.

I do not use Esperanza's name as a suggestion that everyone is familiar with her great-grandmother's "world" or that this is a traditional allusion by any definition. Rather that precisely because it is not an allusion, but a moment of cultural contact where the characters' and reader's "worlds" intersect, we can better understand how Cisneros' text reveals what appear to be obvious "allusions" as moments of contact. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is not only an "allusion"; it is another component of Esperanza's experiences and her process of empowerment. As reader, I cannot define the moment as an "allusion" according to my relationship to the depicted experience. Not only does the reader's "world" touch Esperanza's, but Esperanza's interacts and negotiates with her great-grandmother's "world." Sonia Saldívar-Hull gives us two ways of reading the latter moments of cultural contact:

> Are we to read the great-grandmother's historia as a cautionary tale that the women of her family pass on, warning succeeding generations of the consequences for women who passively accept men's rules? Or is the story instead a master narrative that the women take up as their own and thereby unwittingly reproduce their own oppression and exploitation by their men? (106)

As Saldívar-Hull says, "Esperanza resolves not to duplicate her great-grandmother's history." This is the same radicalness of which Anzaldúa speaks. The process, which includes these moments, allows one to self-consciously label that which she experiences. Esperanza is bad and hope, esperanza. Since Esperanza begins to actively self-label and explore her "badness," she is considered wicked, unwilling to assimilate to other "worlds'" definitions.

Conclusion

Sandra Cisneros distinguishes writing or telling stories for herself and writing them to teach an audience. In Rodríguez Aranda's "On the Solitary Fate of Being Mexican, Female, Wicked and Thirty-three: An Interview with Writer Sandra Cisneros," Cisneros discusses her teaching methods. When she tries to develop the students' storytelling abilities, Cisneros uses references to stories she and the students have in common:

> If I said, "Now, do you remember when Rumple ... ?" They'd say: "Who?", or they more or less would know the story. Or if I'd make an allusion to the "Little Mermaid" or the "Snow Queen," which are very important fairytales to me, and an integral part of my childhood and my storytelling ability today!... ¡No hombre! They didn't know what I was talking about. But if I made an illusion to Fred Flintstone, everyone knew who Fred Flintstone was. (76-77)

In *The House on Mango Street* Cisneros uses *her* stories, not stories she has in common with her students. The fairytales are experiences which help Cisneros, and Esperanza in the book, develop her storytelling abilities. The so-called "allusions" are experiences that she uses in order to empower herself. Although Cisneros uses them in her class, in order to make "world" contact, the primary objective is to make whole her Chicana subjectivity and unite her community. But, the references used must be understood in the context of *The House on Mango Street*'s process of empowerment, *not* a literary tool or political opposition. Recognition of an allusion simply means that the speaker's "world" and the reader's "world" have overlapped and both recognize the same reference which indicates brief moments of cultural contact. A Chicana reader, who presumably shares many of Cisneros' "worlds," understands Esperanza's experiences and the references color those experiences empower their lives. A non-Chicana(o) may use the references in order to better understand the text because s/he shares some "worlds" and not others. However, s/he must realize that Esperanza does not "allude to" her great-grandmother's name, Euroamerican fairytales, or Virginia Woolf for the reader of non-Chicana "worlds"; she identifies her "worlds" and experiences with those other "worlds." For a non-Chicana to traditionally define Cisneros' Chicana feminist process of empowerment is an attempt to understand Esperanza by pre-labeling, and mislabeling, her as a postmodern individual. This would ignore Chicana identity.

Consequently, Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* should be read as a proactive Chicana feminist text. Esperanza's experiences with her names are interwoven with her motifs of empowerment: self-baptism. In order to construct her house in which she can proactively write her own story, Esperanza identifies, resists,

and constructs "worlds." As she does, young Esperanza, like many Chicanas, realizes that in many "worlds" she is constructed as "bad" because she wants to be active, vocally and sexually. In her essay "My Wicked Wicked Ways: The Chicana Writer's Struggle With Good and Evil or Las Hijas de la Malavida," Cisneros says: "In contrast [to being bad], sometimes the wicked stance can be an attractive one, a way to reverse the negative stereotype . . . There is strength in exchanging shame for pride, in redefining oneself" (18). By recognizing her social location and controlling how she constructs herself, Esperanza can then construct her house as "clean as paper before the poem" (108), loose from static and oppressive cultural ties. Depending on your "world," the references, moments of cultural contact, are simultaneously a Chicana's experience or a reference that makes the text accessible for a foreign reader. The same way, depending on how your "world" constructs Sandra Cisneros and Esperanza Cordero, the Chicanas are simultaneously bad and wicked, esperanza.

In their essays, Mohanty and Lugones both, although differently, discuss the relationships between personal experiences, social meanings and cultural identities. Because of these abundant combinations, to identify other people is a complex attempt to negotiate one's own interpretations with those of another. Lugones says those in marginalized cultures "are known only to the extent that they are known in several 'worlds' and as 'world'-travelers" (401). It would be a mistake to confuse these multiple "worlds" as the person's identity; even though, as Lugones also states, without knowing the other's "worlds" one does not know the other. Several "worlds" influence Esperanza, but she never ceases to be in the young-Chicana-in-Chicago "world." Her recognition of this "world" and her self-affirmation create her confidence to declare "Esperanza" as the new, radical name. Esperanza's identity, after the process of the text, accurately recognizes her social location and allows her to develop her personal interests.

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A Feminist and Postmodernist Dialogue with Chicano Males and Mexico or Deconstructing the Prison House of Sexist Language and Structures

Interview with Erlinda Gonzales-Berry

Introduction

The novel *Paletitas de guayaba* (1991) by Erlinda Gonzales-Berry represents—as held by the interviewers—a pivotal contribution to Southwest Mexican narrative on two levels: 1) the first major literary dialogue with Mexican society and letters and 2) an excelling postmodernist text. Using various innovative narrative techniques to bracket traditional novelistic elements, such as time, space, character, language, the text questions the narrative act itself, marking in key instances the message as a call for the feminization of a still predominantly masculinized *Aztlán* and *México*.

Keeping in mind research on the Chicano novel by Juan Bruce-Novoa, Salvador Rodríguez del Pino, Vernon E. Lattin and Manuel de Jesús Hernández-G. as well as significant writings in Chicana feminist theory and literary criticism by Norma Alarcón, Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa and Angie Chabram-Dernersesian, the interviewers designed questions that elicit fundamental answers (biography, education, ideology) from Gonzales-Berry to establish a place for *Paletitas* in the narrative canon. They believe this text's contribution to the Southwest Mexican novel semantically empties the signifiers in the statement, "I dabble in creative writing," by Gonzales-Berry; rather, in *Paletitas* language betrayed her and "said a whole lot of things [the author] wasn't particularly bent on saying."

In the Southwest Mexican narrative, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry made her first

contribution as a critic. The articles, "*Caras viejas y vino nuevo*: Journey Through a Disintegrating Barrio" (1979) and "*Estampas del valle*: From *Costumbrismo* to Self-Reflecting Literature" (1980), were both included in the important critical anthology *Contemporary Chicano Fiction: A Critical Survey* (1986) edited by Vernon E. Lattin. She (with Tey Diana Rebolledo) is also known for one of the first important essays on *The House on Mango Street*, "Growing Up Chicano: Tomás Rivera and Sandra Cisneros" (1985). Editing the exhaustive study *Pasó por Aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexican Literary Tradition, 1542-1988* (1989) represents her major critical contribution, one that will serve as a necessary reference text for decades. Gonzales-Berry has also made a notable contribution to the study of writings by Nuevo Mexicanas in two anthologies: 1) *Las Mujeres Hablan: An Anthology of Nuevo Mexicana Writers* (1988), where she served as coeditor with Tey Diana Rebolledo and Teresa Márquez, and 2) *Nuestras Mujeres: Hispanas of New Mexico—Their Images and Their Lives, 1582-1992* (1992), where she served as associate editor under Tey Diana Rebolledo. She has also recently published a brief memoir of her secondary education at a boarding school, the El Rito Normal School, for Spanish American youths in New Mexico, "A Normal Education: The Spanish-American School at El Rito," *La Herencia del Norte* 3 (1994):20-21.

Originally from Roy, New Mexico, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry teaches courses in Chicano/a and Latin American Literature at the University of New Mexico. She is currently serving as Chair of the recently formed Spanish Department.

A. BIOGRAPHY AND WRITING

1. Where were you born? What is your native language?

I was born in Roy, New Mexico in 1942. My parents taught us (four sisters and myself) both Spanish and English in childhood. However, Spanish was the language most frequently spoken in the family and in our community.

2. When did you start to write short stories and novels?

During the early 70s, I was inspired by emerging Chicano writers and experimented a bit with creative writing. The only thing I ever published from those days was a short poem in *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*. I am happy to say that nothing else has survived. I didn't write again until the 80s when I wrote *Paletitas de guayaba* (Guava popsicles; 1991).

3. Why do you write? Do you seek to give a narrative voice in Spanish to Chicanas? Who is your primary audience?

I can't really say "I write." It is more accurate to say, "I have written." And I have

written very little: 1) *Paletitas de guayaba*, 2) some short vignettes which appeared in *Las Mujeres Hablan* (Women speak; 1989). When I wrote those items, I wrote them because I believed I had something to say that might be of interest to others. That's the packaged answer. Closer to the truth, or *a* truth, may be that I needed to exorcise a rage that was consuming me and I couldn't afford psychoanalysis. That applies to *Paletitas de guayaba.* The "Rosebud" excerpts were motivated by something else. Initially, that was more an exercise than anything else. I am not certain why I wrote *Paletitas de guayaba* in Spanish. One answer could be that having been trained in Latin American Literature Spanish is the language in which I have read more literature. In another place—an MLA conference, I believe—I stated that writing in Spanish allowed me to create a persona which distanced me personally from the act of writing. I also said that I somehow felt more secure writing in Spanish than in English. Perhaps I felt that readers in Spanish would be less judgmental than English language readers. But there is something else; the fact that I grew up listening to stories in Spanish. I remembered the voices of my grandmothers, great aunts and great uncles, aunts and uncles, my father and my mother, and I wanted to imitate them. I think my writing has a certain oral quality to it that I attribute to having been brought up on oral lore, *La Llorona, brujas* and *bultos, apariciones del diablo, la muerte, los días de antes* [Hollering Woman, witches and bodies, appearances of the Devil, Death, in days past], all that great stuff. Also, there is something about freedom. I feel that Spanish gives me more latitude to experiment. I find that English constrains me more. I feel very self-conscious expressing myself creatively in English. As I said elsewhere, perhaps I feel that way because as a child, I always felt loved in Spanish. In English, I felt judged—and of course, I also felt that I never measured up to standards.

I intended my primary audience to be anyone who reads Spanish. However, I believe I had special things to say to both Chicanas(os) and Mexicans.

4. Why did you chose to write in Spanish? Why do you think most Chicana narrators write in English?

I think one writes in the language(es) one handles best. Most Chicanas writing narrative today probably write best in English. There are exceptions, of course, such as Margarita Cota-Cárdenas and Lucha Corpi. Lucha writes beautifully in Spanish, yet her novels are written in English. I don't know why, but perhaps the market has something to do with her choice. The problem with writing in Spanish is that there is not a very broad reading audience for those works. *Paletitas de guayaba*, for example, has gone virtually unnoticed. But then, maybe it's not a linguistic issue. I assume that my writing makes some—maybe a lot—of people uncomfortable, so they pretend they didn't notice it.

5. What role does bilingualism have in your life and your writing project? Your prose writing has been published in both English and Spanish. Is there a

different objective that you want to achieve or create when you write in one or the other languages?

Bilingualism is a way of life for me. I teach daily in Spanish. My academic writing is in Spanish and English. I code-switch with facility when with Chicana and Chicano friends and family. It is important to me in my writing project because it allows me to capture in writing what I do, and what I see others around me doing—speaking more than one language.
When I chose English for the *Rosebud* series, I was very consciously trying to capture Sandra Cisneros's style of writing. She writes in English. I, of course, failed, but I think I began to see that I am capable of giving life to voices that speak English.

6. One of the defining texts of contemporary Chicano literature is *El espejo/The Mirror*, 5th printing, from 1972. Are you familiar with its existence? Did it have any impact on your call to write?

I indeed know *El espejo*. I think almost everything I read written by a Chicana or Chicano in the sixties and early seventies had an impact on me. It made me want to write—want to join that large family that was finally appearing on the written page—and to tell the world about us, *la raza*. I had to wait a long, long time before I was actually ready to write for public consumption.

7. What does the word *feminist* mean to you? Do you consider yourself a feminist? A feminist writer? Has the Chicana writer moved beyond depending on a space or refuge in Anglo-American feminism in order to now be able to express herself and maintain her very own feminist discourse in Chicano literature?

Yes, I am a feminist, and yes, I consider myself a feminist writer. *Feminism* is, for me, a state of consciousness which makes one aware of how structures of domination affect the lives not only of women but of all colonized peoples.
But that is not enough; it is also a state of consciousness that makes one openly oppose and combat practices, discourses, codes, language, etc. that treat/mark women and people of color as inferior, or less than. While I certainly owe a great deal to Anglo feminism, I cannot cease to be Chicana. That I am Chicana means that my feminism will of necessity be affected by that fact. What is most important to me is to feel free to write whatever it is I want and need to write. All of that will come from my experience as a Chicana—a woman reared within a very specific family and marginalized cultural milieu. I would hope that my feminism coincides with that of other Chicanas.

8. The book *Chicano Authors: Inquiry by Interview* (1980) by Juan Bruce-Novoa established Estela Portillo-Trambley as the standard bearer of Chicana

narrative. She has one matrix feminist text, *Rain of Scorpions* (1975), and a novel, *Trini* (1986), which features a female protagonist. How does your writing differ from hers as far as themes and characters?

It's been a long time since I read *Rain of Scorpions*. I remember liking some of her narrative pieces, but I don't remember to what extent I related to them. As far as *Trini* is concerned, I guess my own writing is very different. I would say Portillo is more committed to telling a story. I, on the other hand, am more interested in playing and experimenting with language, and in being irreverent.

9. To which literary tradition do you adhere? Chicano narrative? Chicana narrative? Mexican narrative? Contemporary American narrative?

I certainly place myself within the tradition of Chicana narrative, and also Chicano narrative. I feel a special kinship with Margarita Cota-Cárdenas, with Ana Castillo. I don't see my work fitting within the canon of Mexican literature. American literature, yes. Ours—*manitos*' [New Mexican]—is very much an American experience. When I write from that position, what else could I write if not American literature.

10. What place do you seek in New Mexican narrative? In Southwestern Chicano narrative?

Again, I am a manita. I speak from that position, therefore I seek a place in New Mexican narrative, in a very different way, though, from someone like Anaya, or Ulibarrí—at least in *Paletitas de guayaba*. In the *Rosebud* excerpts, I suppose I am very much in their tradition—nostalgically recalling the past. Inscribing memory, I believe, is one way to preserve culture; it is also a way to create community. Southwestern Chicano narrative? Of course, my work is part of that too.

11. According to Francisco Lomelí, the rise of Chicano narrative in the 1970s coincided with an intense interest in experimentation. At the level of narrative technique, *Paletitas de guayaba* falls into post-modernist fiction. Did you consciously participate in such an interest? Do you believe postmodernism is the path for the near future?

I indeed see my work as fitting on some levels within the rubric of postmodernism. On the other hand, construction of subjectivity and identity is so central to *Paletitas de guayaba* that I am not sure postmodernism can accommodate my work. I think ultimately one's work fits among the other texts that one has read or otherwise absorbed. I live in a postmodern age, I read postmodern texts. What else can I say?

12. Of all the narrative texts from Chicano literature, both male and female,

***Paletitas de guayaba* is the only direct dialogue with Mexico, its youth and intellectuals. What led you to engage in such a matrix discourse?**

When I was working on my Ph.D., I originally had planned to write my dissertation on Mexican writers from La Onda. Our curriculum lead us directly to Latin American "Boom" and post-boom writers. I loved their work (this is before I was reading women writers very much). I suppose I needed to address some of the issues these male writers left under erasure.
But more important, early in my academic career, I travelled to Mexico with students and on University business. The shock—*El choque famoso* [the infamous shock]—was truly overwhelming. *Tuve que escribir sobre eso y de una manera que lo entendiera la gente mexicana, y también la Raza de acá* [I had to write about that and in a way in which the Mexican people could understand it and also Chicanos on this side of the border].

13. Are you familiar with the novel *Noche de califas* (1982) by Armando Ramírez. A Chicana character named Eva appears in the novel. She freely expresses her sexuality and eventually drives the protagonist, Macho Prieto, into madness. Is Marina, the protagonist in *Paletitas de guayaba*, in opposition to the Chicana character, Eva, in *Noche de califas*?

I have not read *Noche de califas*. However, what you say about the protagonist is an interesting twist. Usually it's the women who end up mad. Mari did not intend to drive Sergio mad; she just wanted to give him pleasure. She, herself, could easily have ended up mad, but she saved herself through writing.

14. Will you maintain a dialogue with Mexican society and writers through your writing? Do you consider such a dialogue a necessity? Since Chicano literature is primarily a dialogue with the dominant Anglo-American culture, would you redirect it towards Mexico and the rest of Latin America?

Probably not. I probably said what I had to say for that reader. I would probably have to spend a significant amount of time in Mexico if I were to continue *en la misma onda* [the same theme]. I don't forsee that for the near future. I would like to see more Chicanos and Chicanas engage in that dialogue. *¿Quién sabe* [Who knows]*?* We may be forced to do so in the very near future with the Free "Raid" Agreement. I do think, however, that Gloria Anzaldúa (and others, of course, but she with a sense of urgency) has opened an important space for a crucial dialogue that must take place in and around the *frontera* [border] by those of use who reside on both sides.

15. Does the dialogue primarily involve females and males, that is, Chicanas, Chicanos, Mexicanos and Anglos?

There is room and need for dialogue that takes us beyond ourselves. That takes us across gender, cultural and national boundaries, race and class differences. Otherwise, how will we ever come to know and to respect each other?

16. Do male characters affect Marina's feminist consciousness? In what way?

I think male character's affect Marina's consciousness too much. But she is young; she is still somewhat male dependent and she needs males to define herself. Yet when she gets older, when she recalls/reconstructs the story of her youth, she can put it all in perspective and say any damn thing she wants without worrying about offending males. She is finally free of their hold.

17. Does the high impact of male characters on the protagonist, who is the dominant consciousness, undermine a feminist ideological project? If so, why?

The way you ask this question tells me *you believe it does*. Perhaps that is so. But perhaps it does not so much undermine an ideological project as reveal the path toward a feminist project for certain women of a certain background and of a certain generation.

18. As you are aware at the end of the 1980s Chicana writers engaged in exploring sexuality in their writing. You yourself contributed an excerpt from *Paletitas de guayaba*, "Conversaciones con Sergio" [Conversations with Sergio], to the journal *Third Woman*, volume iv. Your novel openly examines female sexuality through the protagonist Marina. Other Chicana narrative works do the same: the novels *The Mixquihuala Letters* (1986) and *Sapagonia* (1990) by Ana Castillo plus the short story "Eyes of Zapata" (1991) by Sandra Cisneros. How does this discourse on sexuality contribute to Chicana liberation? Is it in opposition to male sexuality in the novels by Alejandro Morales?

I see my own discourse on sexuality as necessary for breaking through so many layers of cultural (and I use this word very broadly here) repression. I think this tendency in the work of Chicana writers (certainly, my own) stems from the urgent need to decolonize our minds. But how can we decolonize our minds, if our bodies remain sites of colonization and domination? I cannot speak for Alejandro. Perhaps, he is striving for the same thing. Unfortunately, male discourse on sexuality so often is constructed over the passive bodies of females. If Chicana discourse on sexuality is in opposition to male discourse, it is to show that we are more than passive females whose *raison-de-être* is to assume the missionary's wife's position for males. And to be fair to Alejandro, I think that in his more recent writing he is trying to work through the ubiquitous panopticon that represses human sexuality in general.

19. In the 1980s Chicano narrators write about the 19th century, the border

and family generations. On the other hand, Margarita Cota-Cárdenas publishes *Puppet* (1984), Lucha Corpi writes *Delia's Song* (1988) and you introduce *Paletitas de guayaba* (1991). These three novels examine the militant period of the Chicano Movement. Their *engagé* discourse recalls *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1972) by Oscar Zeta Acosta. Why do you think Chicana narrators show a marked interest in such a period while male narrators remain silent?

You may have a point there. Perhaps it is our way of appropriating the movement retrospectively, since on many levels we were denied the claim that we too had a hand in its construction. Everyone was busy pretending that *el único lugar para las manos de las chicanas era en la masa* [the only place for Chicana hands was in the tortilla dough].

20. In Chicana narrative production from the 1970s to 1992, which texts do you consider have made a fundamental contribution to its development and must be addressed in some form by future works?

Obviously Sandra has had great impact. I think Helena María Viramontes's work is critical. Ana Castillo, is tops in *Mixquiahala Letters*. Someone who has received little attention is Margarita Cota-Cárdenas. I think her work is fascinating in a postmodern sort of way, and certainly Denise Chávez, Roberta Fernández, Lucha Corpi, Mary Helen Ponce. *Todas, sabes, todas las hermanas chicanas.*

21. One can safely say that Cota-Cárdenas and yourself are the only two Chicana novelists who write in Spanish. Do both of you form part of one specific writer's circle? Why did you choose to write in Spanish? Will you continue to write in that language or make a transition to English like Alejandro Morales? Do you think any Chicana writers in their twenties will follow Cota-Cárdenas and yourself in writing in Spanish? Do you plan to translate *Paletitas de guayaba* into English?

I think Margarita and I coincide in that our academic backgrounds are very similar. Also, we are of the same generation. This probably accounts for the similarities in our work. I will write some in Spanish, probably shorter narrative. Any writing I do in the near future will be in English, if for no other reason than to prove to myself that I can do it. I indeed hope that young writers will follow in our footsteps. *Si no, vamos a perder algo muy precioso* [If not, we are going to lose something very dear]. I don't know about translation. I have been approached more than once, but I am not ready. I am not sure that the style—orality, play, etc.—will translate well.

22. In considering your work we can see that you have a very diverse set of writings. Could you speak about your social objective in writing grammar and

narrative books as well as literary criticism?

I am first and foremost an academician. I write literary criticism, and I dabble in creative writing. I hope to change that order in the near future. By the way, I have never written a grammar book, but I have written articles on language pedagogy.

23. In June 1993, the UNAM sponsored a conference in Mexico City organized by Prof. Clair Joysmith featuring Mexicana and Chicana writers. Elena Poniatowska, Sandra Cisneros, Helena Viramontes, Ana Castillo, and several other important writers participated. In what ways will this conference contribute to the dialogue between the Southwest and Mexico, specifically between Chicanas and Mexicanas?

I am glad to hear this is happening. We have so much to learn from each other. But we must be very careful. In meeting the needs of expanded markets, we may pay a price—*el de nuestras almas, si me entiendes* [the price of our soul, if you know what I mean].

B. THE TEXT ITSELF

1. What meaning does the title *Paletitas de guayaba* have for you?

It was more than anything an image for centering my narrative which began with my childhood in Mexico. When I think of Mexico, I can actually feel the taste of street popsicles in my mouth. Perhaps it was just the treacherous unconscious at work.

2. Which Chicana/o and Mexican writers influenced your writing of *Paletitas de guayaba*? Which and whose techniques helped you develop your own?

Cota-Cárdenas, her irreverence and boldness; Denise Chávez, her love for *familia* [the family]; Ana Castillo, her delicious irony; Morales, our Chicano maverick; Elizondo, *por lo mal habla'o* [for his bawdiness]; Hinojosa; his wonderful humor—*de este lado* [from this side of the border]. *Del otro* [from the other side]—José Agustín, *y el gran papi* [the Great Daddy], Octavio Paz. *Entre mujeres* [from among the women], Rosario Castellanos, Marta Traba, *y la mera, mera* [the incomparable] Sor Juana.

3. Do Sergio and the Anglo professor who seduces the protagonist symbolize oppression at different levels, for example, student-teacher relationship, Anglo-Chicana subordination, and Mexicano-Chicana relationship? That is, do they symbolize female oppression in both societies at various levels: economic,

psychological, cultural, gender, and sexual?

What can I say. I doubt very much that I was in control of all those levels. I truly believe that language betrays us at every turn, and while I may have been wanting to say one thing, I probably said a whole lot of things I wasn't particularly bent on saying.

4. What particular historical elements of Mexican society do you examine in the novel? The Tlatelolco massacre, guerrilla war, and what else?

Colonial texts, attitudes of Mexicanos toward Chicanos, class stratification, cultural myths like La Malinche, Mexico's convenient amnesia.

5. In the novel, why did you choose to have Mari find her identity in Mexico, especially in a space named Casa Aztlán? Why did you not place her in some barrio in New Mexico or in another space of Southwest?

As I said earlier, I had been travelling to Mexico frequently just before writing *Paletitas de guayaba*. I felt enamored, frustrated, angry, befuddled, inspired, rejected of/by/at Mexico. I wanted to write about those emotions and I also wanted to document one of the most beautiful periods of my life—my childhood in Mexico. The casa Aztlán thing was something that I discovered in Mexico. I learned that there had been such a house where Chicanos studying at the UNAM lived, but I never knew anyone who had been directly involved. After I wrote *Paletitas de guayaba*, I had a student at New Mexico who had actually lived there. In *Paletitas de guayaba*, it, of course, functions as a secure harbor in a sea of alienation.

6. Some readers argue that the relationship between Sergio and Marina marks a sexist structure in *Paletitas de guayaba*. Beyond the mutual love between both of them, the female protagonist is locked into a student-teacher relationship with Sergio, where the latter apparently is the teacher. How does the feminist world view subvert such an apparent sexist structure? How is such a view constructed in the novel?

Of course it is a sexist structure. Our discourse, contestatory as it may strive to be, is trapped in the prison house of sexist language and structures. I think this relationship mirrors the experience of women who did advanced study in American universities before the heyday of feminism. How we struggled to maintain some sense of self and dignity, but had no mirrors to look into except male eyes and texts. *Y pa'cabarla de fregar* [And to make things worse] they did their damnedest to make us despise the work of women. Fortunately we carried the memory of our mothers, *abuelitas, tías*, [grandmothers, aunts] etc. or we would never have survived. I wanted to represent that experience so that other women, especially young Chicanas,

would question it, and vow not to repeat it. I still see this going on in university settings—young women who won't come near Chicana professors, who prefer to be mentored by males because they continue to see us as inferior to our male colleagues. *Y no se les haga que sólo Sergio es el maestro aquí* [And one should not think that Sergio is the only teacher]. It is very possible that he too may have learned a few things from Mari. There is no doubt, however, that he is her mentor.

7. What is your concept of La Malinche? What function does she play in the configuration of the protagonist Marina? Does the latter have a Malinche function in relationship with the Anglo professor and with Sergio? With the new Chicano society present in the novel?

La Malinche is the element of subversion that you allude to above. She is as much, if not more of a teacher to Mari than Sergio or el gavacho [the white dude]. Personally she is a figure that has always fascinated me and I wanted to know her better. When she spoke to me, I was left breathless. I found her to be more complex than I had ever imagined her to be. I felt about her the way I felt about my mother, whom I cared for her as she battled cancer. As she passed from being my mother to my child, dependent on me for her every need, I learned to see her as more than my mother, as a deeply complex, wise, and admirable, woman trapped in sexist constructs. Likewise, I came to see La Malinche as an complex and extraordinary woman—also trapped in a cultural gender code.

8. Does the high impact of male characters on the protagonist, who is the dominant consciousness, undermine a feminist ideological project? That is, why are the Anglo professor and Sergio Marina's teachers? What is the difference between both of them?

They are, and they aren't different. Sergio is much closer culturally to Mari. He is far more sensitive to women's issues than Steve, who is really a self-serving sanamabichi. He also understands the plight of Chicanos and understands oppression in global terms. In the end, however, he must give himself to *greater* causes. And indeed there are more important things in the world than Mari's individual desire. But then "The Woman Question" has always been secondary to the *real* issues on the agendas of enlightened males *¿qué no?*

9. At the closing of the novel Sergio seems to be a superficial or unidimensional figure. To what extent is this image necessary to construct the feminist subject? Does his configuration or role matter?

I considered developing him more. In the end, however, I decided I could accomplish what I thought was important without developing him. His role is thus a pretext, but through his presence I was able allude to other issues.

10. What is the symbolic function of the tía-abuela and the mother? Of the character Dolores Huerta?

When we (my sisters and I) were young, if we ever left home for more than a few days, we had to go to our abuelitas for *la bendición* [a blessing ritual]. As a Chicana, I cannot do *anything*, embark upon any trip, adventure or project without calling upon my foremothers for *la bendición*. They appear in *Paletitas de guayaba* to guide me, to give me their bendición.
While I was writing *Paletitas de guayaba*, I had the honor of meeting Dolores Huerta. I just wanted to pay homage to another one of my heroinas chicanas.

11. A writer draws much from her experience when writing fiction. To what extent is this true in your case? How much of *Paletitas de guayaba* is based on your life experience?

The childhood experiences in Mexico are autobiographical. Most of the stuff having to do with *familia* [family] is also autobiographical. Once Mari gets past puberty, she's on her own; she constructs herself word by word.

12. The short-story "Rosebud" and the novel *Paletitas de guayaba* feature two key stages in a woman's development, adolescence and young womanhood. In your writing agenda what does the first have to do with the second? Why are they in different languages?

I've spoken a little about this above. *Rosebud* is still in the writing and some of the issues present in *Paletitas de guayaba* will appear in it, though in a much more subdued fashion. The dawning of sexuality will be an important theme in *Rosebud*. *Paletitas de guayaba* is perhaps the aftermath, the story of the thwarting of sexuality, and one woman's effort to regain it.

13. In the 1980s Chicana lesbians made a noticeable contribution to Chicana and Chicano literature, for example, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. They co-edited *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) which won the literary prize Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award in 1986 and Anzaldúa published the acclaimed book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Does the presence of Isaura in *Paletitas de guayaba* represent your dialogue with their contribution? Do you feel that heterosexual Chicanas must address the lesbian question? How pertinent is such a question to Chicana literature?

A very definite yes to all of your questions. My inclusion of Isaura was my attempt to at least acknowledge and make room for the presence of Chicana lesbians *within* our cultural borders. It is of course only a minimal gesture, and I believe that

heterosexual Chicanas must indeed enter into a serious dialogue with Chicana lesbian writers. I think their impact on our literary corpus—both Chicana and Chicano—has been tremendous.

14. Will there be a sequel to *Paletitas de guayaba*?

I've though about that. Perhaps I will write about Mari at the stage of her life when she constructs the *Paletitas de guayaba* text. I might set it in an American University that fires all its Chicana professors for being rabble rousers. Hmmmm, definitely has possibilities.

15. What is the role of the writer?

To inscribe the voices of those who might otherwise remain silent.

Manuel de Jesús Hernández-G.
Michel Nymann

Arizona State University

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Coming Home
Interview with Cherríe Moraga

Introduction.

In 1981, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa redefined the feminist movement in the United States. The publication of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* challenged the feminist movement to rethink the privileged term "woman." *Bridge*, by providing a combination of *testimonios*, poetry, short fiction, and essays, suggests the multiplicity of experiences and the various diasporas filling the streets of the United States. But until *Bridge*'s publication, these experiences were largely hidden from literary and academic sight. *Bridge* put pressure on both the terms "woman" and "feminist" and initiated a rethinking of Anglo-American feminism which had until then largely ignored its Anglo middle-class biases.

Shortly after the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*, Moraga began working on her ground-breaking autobiography, *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (1983). In this cross-genre collection, Moraga explores the experience of writing with "your *familia* on one shoulder and the *movimiento* on the other." She discusses the seemingly contradictory experience of being a Chicana and a lesbian, and she critiques *familia*, the Chicano Movement, white racism, and sexism. The style of the text, in combining poetry, prose, and fiction, reinforces the content's challenges to existing hierarchies, institutionalized racism, homophobia, and patriarchy. The concluding essay, "A Long Line of Vendidas" is one of the most anthologized Chicana feminist essays. Moraga next turned to writing theater. Her three plays, *Giving Up the Ghost, Shadow of a Man*, and *Heroes and Saints*, argue for the intimate link between political and economic realities and daily family culture. *Giving up the Ghost* (1986), written largely in poetic monologues, describes the experiences of a young woman coming to terms with her sexuality, her past, and the puzzles of heterosexuality. *Shadow of a Man* (1990) examines family dynamics built around keeping a threatening secret. Set in the deadly pesticide fields of California's agribusiness, *Heroes and Saints* (1992) depicts a Chicano community's attempt to confront genocide, racist apathy, and family loss. While each of Moraga's plays tackles serious subjects, she infuses all of her work with humor and poetry,

with Chicanidad.

Most recently, Moraga has published *The Last Generation* (1993), a collection of essays and poems. In this volume she addresses the post-Quincentennary *movimiento*, the state of Chicano/a activism, the siege upon gays and lesbians of color, and her own identity as a woman turning forty. Her poetry and essays are less autobiographical in this collection, but they continue to draw on family memories and experiences.

As we sat in a small café down the street from Arroyo Books in Highland Park on April 24, 1994, Moraga reflected on her artistic production to date, commenting on issues of representation, reception, and literary production. Before we started the interview, Moraga and her sister JoAnn noted the surrounding barrio. They had lived there in the first years of their lives before moving to South Pasadena and then to San Gabriel. So the reading that Moraga was to give later that Sunday afternoon to a packed audience at Arroyo Books was something of a homecoming.

M. and J.: **There is no doubt that both your fiction and essays, for example, *This Bridge Called My Back*: *Writings by Radical Women of Color,* has had a profound impact on mainstream literary criticism in academia. How do you feel about the teaching of this text by mainstream feminists? Do you think there is any misappropriation? Do you think that they dismiss it as a sociological piece of work? How can we reach a better understanding of this text?**

C.: I think initially what happened with the book was what Gloria [Anzaldúa] and I had envisioned or hoped which is that it be used by Chicano Studies, Women Studies, community centers and all of that. It has been used on all those levels. In that sense I feel like it has fulfilled its mandate. What feminist theorists have done with it is mixed. One of the ways in which it has been misappropiated is that sometimes they look no further than *Bridge*. They do all this Anglo material and then only do *Bridge*, which somehow covers everything they think they need to know about other women of color. *Bridge* is thirteen years old. It came out in 1981. A lot has changed since then; there is a certain way in which some of the material is generic, women of color. I think that white feminists as a whole feel more comfortable working with the generic notion of women of color and try to put everyone under that rubric as opposed to the specificity of each of the ethnic/racial groups. The book has a lot of things missing. It is not at all international in perspective. If I were to do a *Bridge* now, it would have to be much more international. To be talking about women of color feminism in the United States and not connect with all the diasporas is ridiculous. On the one hand, some white women use it as a way to cover themselves. On the other, in terms of the criticism that has come out about *Bridge* I do not know. Norma Alarcón has written extensively about how *Bridge* has been misappropriated, I think she articulates that fine. That is her job. Frankly I stopped reading the criticism. It is not just about *Bridge*, but it happens with my own individual work. For the most part, I don't really mind very much as

long as it keeps generating ideas and discussion. On an individual level, I would wonder what really are the motives of each of the individuals involved in teaching this book. Do they have a broad perspective or serious anti-racist politics or are they just appropriating the book? I have no control over that so I try not to worry about that because there is nothing I can do. Once the work is out, it has its own life. It is not yours anymore which is fine with me. I just try not to pay too much attention and I let the critics battle it out with each other.

M.: That's the next move if you were going to do another anthology, a broader one, more inclusive of various diasporas?

C.: No, I would not do that. I have been teaching a class called "Indígena Scribe" for about three years now which is a group of Native-American, Chicana, and Latina writers. The material that is coming out of that group of people is very specific using *indigenismo* as a kind of base root which is fascinating to me. I would be interested in doing a collection possibly of their creative work which is very original in trying to show why that indigenous root connection is significant in the creative imagination. But, that is very, very specific. I think my tendency is to aim to get more and more specific as opposed to producing another generic work. Of course, it was not generic at the time. But I don't think that I would put myself in the position of doing another collection of people outside my own ethnic/racial background because the time is not right for that. The reason we did *Bridge* was because the time was right. It was more out of the virtue of the invisibility that women of color had in the women's movement. That is no longer the case. Every single writer in *Bridge* has her own book now. Those are all established writers. Now there is a body of indigenous literature. There is a body of Latina literature. There is a body of Asian-American literature. It is a different time and place. It would have to be re-conceptualized in a totally different manner. There is not a need for another *Bridge*, but there is a need for other kinds of more specific writings. Also, editing is a lot of work. One has to be really driven by a particular vision and that's what *Bridge* was. We were driven by a particular vision in 1979 out of virtual isolation and invisibility.

J.: One element I liked about *Esta puente, mi espalda* (the Spanish version of *Bridge*) is your inclusion of the interview that Ana Castillo did with the Watsonville workers whereas most literary anthologies would exclude that kind of voice. Was it a way to bridge the gap between community and academia?

C.: Well it was an attempt to do that. Most of those women were already going to college. They were community-based women, but they were not *obreras*. There is a lot more that could have been done around that. In doing another collection, I certainly would not limit it to writers only. If I were not going to do a creative writing anthology and focus on feminism of a certain type, I think now I would work much

harder to record oral histories and interviews from people who were really working-class, *campesina* women. I think that was a nice gesture in the right direction. I agree with you. That is what is needed as opposed to this academic separation.

J.: **What was the experience of making *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* like? How did you meet the other two editors, Alma Gómez and Mariana Romo-Carmona? What was it like forming the networks?**

C.: Alma was part of the collective, Kitchen Table Press. When we started Kitchen Table Press, the first book we did was *Bridge* because it had been published by a white feminist press and it went bankrupt. We had to get lawyers to try to get the book back. Actually, a lot of the motivation for Kitchen Table Press came about because of those kinds of situations where women of color did not have control over their own production. In essence we never intended to do *Bridge*. We also never intended to do *Home-girls* because *Home-girls* was going to be done by the same press. Then suddenly the press dropped both projects leaving it up to us to save them. The first two projects were to rescue those books.
The third project *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* was kind of conceived among the collective which mostly consisted of black women. There had been collections of black women writers. At that time in 1983, there were very few by Latinas that were not simply Latin American women in translation. We were trying to connect U.S. Latinas with Latin American women and cover all the classes too that a lot of bourgeoisie Latin American women had ignored. Also we wished to include material that was unequivocally feminist which other collections had not done up to that point. Alma was Nuyorican and we wanted someone who was Latin American and that's how we met Mariana so that we could cover those three areas. A fourth person who essentially wrote the introduction with me was Myrtha Chabrán who was *puertorriqueña* born on the island, a good generation older than me. She was very critical in the development of that book as well.

J.: **Your movement around cities from Los Angeles to New York to San Francisco has converted you into an urban traveler. How have these experiences affected your writing? Have community activities influenced you in any way?**

C.: Well, I was told by a psychic many years ago and I can't forget it because I don't want it to be true. She said, "Forget your house on the ocean. You are never going to be a writer who can escape and have a nice contemplative life." That's probably true. I think about that, which is why I always end up in the cities all the time. I still think about leaving the cities. Now that I have a child even more so. But I am always drawn to cities because I think one of the reasons is just survival. Being both Chicana and lesbian, major cities are the only safe place where one can be both of these identities visible at once and find a cultural community to cultivate all of those

identities. It has always been that more than anything else; the bottom line is that one has to feel that one can be all those parts of yourself wherever you are living. I think that is why I have always gravitated to cities. Even when I left San Gabriel to move to Hollywood, it was easier to be all those things in Hollywood or Silver Lake than San Gabriel which was the suburbs.

In terms of political or community activism, I always feel that I have known some hard core organizers and I am not one of them. I have not been on the front line of organizing. I have always been community based though. As an artist, I have always felt that I wrote out of a political and community point of reference and I have also done political organizing. But there has always been this trade-off between how much time I had to write and how much time I had to be an organizer. I always ended up choosing more myself as an artist and say, "Well, that's the work. That's my work, but at the same time trying to keep links and connections with the kinds of activism going on in a community so that I had something to write about." I had a base from which to write.

I think teaching for me has always been an element of that community. I see teaching as a way to raise consciousness, to advocate, to agitate, to cultivate a new generation of people who will be challenging agendas. Particularly now that I am not teaching in academia, but that I am teaching in a community base in the Mission District in San Francisco, that I am teaching queer youth, many of whom are very high risk, who live on the streets. Those kinds of things always keep me sharper, less complacent, more challenged, to deal with young people. My concepts are constantly challenged. But I am not doing what my sister does for example. There are a lot of differences. As a principal of a bilingual school in La Puente, she talks about having to be social worker, cop, keeping youth out of the house when parents are drug addicts, this one is threatening to kill that one. It is very first hand, direct contact with Raza who are in need. For the most part as a writer, it keeps you a little bit removed, not to say that I don't experience this, but I deal with the kids I teach. I say that I am not front-line out of respect for the people who have direct contact with these situations. People need to know that there is a difference between being an organizer and being an artist. Both of them have absolutely appropriate roles in the world. I am thinking of my friend Barbara García in Watsonville who began *La clínica para la salud de la gente*. When the earthquake hit in Watsonville back in 1989, she was there in a tent city 24 hours a day basically organizing the damned city better than the Fire Department by making sure everybody was fed, clothed, with a roof over their head. That is front-line work. She is a sister. She needs my work the same way I need hers. It is mutual, but it is not the same thing. I reiterate that because people in academia have this notion that because you live in the barrio, you are a writer, that is somehow front-line work. Yet, it is not. I really think that is an academic perspective. It is very convenient for me to think that too, but there is a difference.

J.: **Do you see yourself as part of a generation of U.S. Latina writers?**

C.: Yes, I see myself as part of the first generation of U.S. Latina writers. In terms of volume and production of Latina/Chicana writing in the United States, we are a very young group of writers. I mean I did not have a generation to read. By virtue of that, most of us that are producing now are really writing the literature that a generation younger than us is capable of reading. There is something for them to read. But I still feel we are very young. We are not even writing close to what I hope we can be writing in twenty years.
When you don't have that history, when you don't have that literary tradition, it is very liberating and exciting because it has a kind of political significance and the writing that follows will never quite be that same kind of ground-breaking phenomenon. But by the same token, I think we are cultivating our voice: we have not had a lot of role models and practice. I feel like all of us are still learning how to do it. People seem to be getting better at it.

J.: **Who do you include in this generation?**

C.: In terms of Chicana writers, I think of Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Gloria Anzaldúa. I consider these women to be the primary ones. Also, Lorna Dee Cervantes is the top for me as a poet. She is fabulous. I would also include Denise Chávez, Helena María Viramontes and others still. But I think that Sandra, Ana, Gloria and Lorna Dee are probably the most significant in terms of the impact they are having at the national level, a national readership. In some cases, the ground that they are breaking in terms of theme and subject.

J.: **It is an interesting border literary position to be in because the works of these authors can be used in both American and Latin American literary traditions.**

C.: Well I think that will happen more with the translations. Also, Elena Poniatowska has done a lot to expose Chicana writers in Mexico because there is such prejudice against us, basically elitism and class, that they did not take us seriously. In that respect, she has been very significant in making our works known. Also, I think there is cross-fertilization that is happening because of lesbian connections that happen among Latinas in Latin American and in the United States.

J.: **In *Loving in the War Years*, one of the ways you represent the female body is through the historical figure of the Malinche, who strives for self-empowerment as a resistance against patriarchal domination. How do you see women redefining their sexual roles and "putting flesh back on the object" as critic Norma Alarcón says?**

C.: This is what I like about Gloria and Ana's work. I do feel like they are trying to examine what is WOMAN. What is Mexican woman which is not what all the

writers are trying to do. Not all Chicana writers are about that, just because they are writing about women. Everybody has different levels of skill, talent and concerns. When I think about *Borderlands* and *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, those are two books that really did try to unravel what is la mujer mexicana/chicana. It is incredibly painful to look at that. It is not pretty how we have been distorted as a people, as a consciousness, a collective notion of what la mujer mexicana/chicana is. It is not nice. It is not a pretty picture. I think a lot of people deal with it in different ways. Some people create positive images while others dress her differently. Those are all ways that they create her.

But the work that I gravitate towards is a work that tries to tear it apart. Even then if all you see is the raw guts and it does not smell or look good, at least you are starting from somewhere. That is what moves me as a writer, what I need to read and I will read anybody who does it even if she is not Latina.

I think of a book like, *Thereafter Johnny*, by Carolivia Herron, a black woman. It is a crazy book where this woman writes about incest, but in a very taboo way. What you can see there is an artist trying to unravel a theme. It goes back into slave history trying to figure out what slavery did to black men and women and how it destroyed their relationship with each other. What she comes up with is devastating. Again, it is not a pleasant work but I ate that book up because I feel like I am trying to do that for better or for worse. As lousy as I do it or as good as I do it, that is what I want to do. If there is anything I knew being raised as a Mexican daughter, it is the beauty in it and the horror in it. I want to give to that and recreate her. But I may never recreate her. I may write until I am ninety and just be taking it apart.

So for me the best Chicana literature is about that. Malinche is part of that. The reason we have been so drawn to her figure over and over again is because how a woman can go from being Malintzin to *la Chingada* says everything. Right? Look at what Chingada means. She is our paradigm. How you change from being an Aztec princess to the fucked one and culpable for everything that ever happened to Mexican society tells you something about what Mexican culture is about in relation to women. Of course, everything is written out of an act of love. If I didn't give a damn about my culture and did not love it so much, I would have escaped it and done something else.

J.: **In your writings, you seem to be dialoguing with a variety of authors-- Octavio Paz in *El laberinto de la soledad*, Carlos Fuentes in *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* and more.**

C.: I am dialoguing with many people. I dialogue with García Lorca because I write theater. As a gay man or a homosexual, his passion, his desire, his revolutionary vision, writing in a time as an act of resistance, I feel a lot of affinity with him and he also wrote extensively on women. Yet, he is not a woman, so there are places in his works that are twisted about women and yet, I am drawn to some of his revelations about women. I am connected with the Spanish and the Indian. You end

up being in dialogue with everything.
I remember the first time I read the Egyptian writer Nawal El-Sadaawi I thought I would lose my mind because I thought she was a Mexican. In terms of sensibility, I felt there was something in this novel that made me start thinking about the broader connection. In the end we are all related. I just think that I do look a lot at what Arabic women write. I don't know if that is just an accident that I just start finding myself drawn to it, even southern Italian women writers or others.

M.: **Maybe you could talk more about that aspect. Who are your influences? Who do you read? For example, I have seen articles comparing you to John Rechy.**

C.: Also there have been many articles that have compared me and Richard Rodríguez which I understand. It is not because we both have the same political perspective. The truth of the matter is that I feel like what Richard writes about are the same things that preoccupy me. All that stuff--his complexion, his desire, church, education and more. Yet, his conclusions are totally confused, but his writing is beautiful, though, and he writes about the right subjects. I think he is one of the few Chicano male writers who is writing about the issues we need to hear. Unfortunately, his conclusions are off. In a sort of perverted way, I have always felt a kind of kinship with him.
The writers who have had an impact on me are Rosario Castellanos, García-Lorca and James Baldwin by virtue of the fact that he is colored and queer. Also, he wrote about it when I could not read anybody else who was colored and queer. He was also someone who was deeply committed politically and also deeply committed to the description of desire. He refused to compromise desire for politics. That was very rare when everybody else was telling me I had to do that.
In recent years I read works by Native American women. I love the works of Leslie Marmon Silko, especially *Ceremony*; she is a visionary, not being afraid to envision. In fact her visions come true. She is very important. As a poet, Jo Harjo. I have always read black women since the beginning. Recently as a playwright, I have read all of August Wilson's work. It really depends. You go through different periods of your life.

J.: **Would you like to discuss the impact of your mother's role on your writing?**

C.: I felt like *Loving in the War Years* was a love letter to my mother far more than anything else. There is a line about family—for better or for worse it is a place you learn to love.
I think that the specific role of my mother is important in terms of my writing in that she is the storyteller in the family. I learned more about storytelling than through reading. Unlike Gloria Anzaldúa who was one of those kids who hid under the covers hiding trying to read with the flashlights, I was a worker. I liked to work. I

did things.

Jo Ann: Someone asked me what was she like when she (Cherríe) was little. Was she very outgoing? I said no. She was very private. It was only when we pretended together that her imagination came about. Other than that, my mother and I told the stories to her. We were the storytellers. She was the storer of the stories who eventually ended up being the spokesperson of the stories.

C.: I think part of it too was that my sister JoAnn and I are so close in age, about eighteen months apart, a companion constantly in childhood. She said to me in moments of great significance, "This is very important. Remember this. Five years from now let's talk about this." A record was being kept. We were conscious as children of significant facts that were happening. Memories were very important. My mother and my aunts were always passing stories down so that it became important to talk about what was happening around us.
Certainly there were all kinds of secrets and silences in the family, but passion was acceptable in a certain degree except when it became my own at sixteen. Desire for life. Between JoAnn and my mom everything was coming to me as the youngest. In *Shadow of a Man*, I identify a lot with the youngest child Lupe because she is also the emotional sponge of the family. JoAnn was much more *rebelde* than I was. I took everything in, particularly my mother's pain. When one does that, it cultivates a listener and a sense that other people have lives, a compassion for others. As a writer, you have to be a listener and have a compassion about other people's lives. As a child my mother cultivated that for me for better or for worse because there are many negative aspects about taking in this emotional strength too. It is also too much to burden a kid. Yet, if there is anything I drew on it would be my understanding; at seven years old I had all the complexity of an adult. It was a complex life because my mother was two generations older than me. At the age of seven I thought I understood her whole life. Life was not simple. Everything had multi-leveled layers to it. The world was something I had to unravel and come to terms with. It was not safe, necessarily but you had to be able to deal with it. So it was like drama, right? And I think more than anything that's how she affected my sense that I use now as a writer. Essentially anybody's life is worthy of literature.

M.: **When you talk about a writer's block, you said it is because you have a secret. Could you talk a little more about the connections you see between secrets and writing?**

C.: Well I think the danger about writing is that it anticipates you. If you are open and fluid enough with your work, the writing can sometimes leak information into you, like dreams. If you are plugging into the same unconscious place, you may not be able to live up to what you see. Yet, that is the kind of writing that is the best kind of writing, the place that touches our unconscious. As you are keeping the secret,

you are going to work very hard to repress your unconscious. The writing will not be as good because the unconscious is much smarter than the ego, one level of writing. If a writer can tap into her unconscious, the writing is going to be much richer with other voices and memories. If a writer cannot tap into her unconscious, the writing is going to be flatter work.

M.: **Is there a connection between *indigenismo* and the indigenous imagination and secrets?**

C.: I don't know for sure. If we have Indian blood in us, it has been buried in the family. I could not tell you. As a Mexican, I am drawing from indigenous influences. In looking more closely at that *raíz* one begins to draw from those unconscious places, the *indigenismo* is the one where I end up going. That is part of the terrain of my unconscious for whatever reason-if it is racial memory, biological, DNA, I don't know. I have no control over this process. It is happening of its own accord. I do it with reservation too by virtue of the fact that I do not want to claim what is not mine. By the same token, what is there is there. Just let it come to you as opposed to pushing it.

M.: **Could you talk about how you started writing *teatro* and what brought you to it?**

C.: I started writing theater by accident when I finished *Loving in the War Years* which is essentially an autobiography, essays, and poems. When I finished it in 1983, I felt like I had finished my own story, not to say I would not write from my own perspective but in a certain way I thought a burden had been lifted from me. So I continued to write in my journals but suddenly it was not autobiography. It was other people talking to me and that is how *Giving Up the Ghost* came about which is a kind of transition because it is more *teatropoesía* with monologues and poetic voices. That is the transition from poet to playwright. Then I just fell in love with theater. I had been in New York at the time and I submitted *Giving Up the Ghost* to apply for María Irene Fornes' "Hispanic Playwriting Lab," in New York City, at Inter Theater. Once I started working with her, I was connected with others. I began to write dialogue for the first time in my life.

M.: **Had she been a big influence on you?**

I would say just in that period. People credit her with having more influence on me than she does. There are a lot of Chicano playwrights who continued to work with her. She has a style of playwriting that deals more with character than plot development which is the same thing with me. She does really approach it as a poet. On that level, she had a strong influence on me in the sense that had I worked with a traditional playwright, I never would have written plays. But she let me approach

it as a poet and encouraged that.
But the difference lies in the fact that María Irene is not as focused on language in her work as I am. As a poet, I feel that is the main thing for me. In theater, that element is not as important--to be able to write visual images in language and yet, that is what I still aim to do in theater. For example, August Wilson does that, but it is not a priority for most playwrights. In that sense, I take a departure from her. And she really supported that in my own writing. Also, politically we had different perspectives.
The reason I continue to write theater is because I feel it is the one place that I can expose the *poesía* in the common tongue. Traditionally, people do not put those two things together. Yet, the way we grew up, basically anyone bilingual, people learned to speak English in a beautiful combination—the spoken Spanish with the written English. To me this is very poetic particularly when I grew up among *cuentistas*. The theater is then one way that allows me to contribute to that.
After that I only worked with her for a year and then she directed a play of mine *Shadow of a Man* in New York City in 1990.

M.: **I think it is interesting that you talk about the pleasures of writing as well as the frustrations. Could you expand on that and the problems of getting produced in Los Angeles? What does it mean to be a playwright in Los Angeles?**

C.: Well, UCLA was very interested in doing *Heroes and Saints*. It is ironic to me that Los Angeles, which has the biggest Mexicano/Chicano population outside of Mexico City, is the one place where it seems that it is the most difficult for me to get my plays produced. On a certain level the frustration is that I am barred (censored) from my own audience, the reason for that being that the caliber of Latino actors that I would like to work with are here in Los Angeles. Although there are also many good ones in San Francisco, most of them end up moving here to Los Angeles to work. Those are actors I would like to work with. It is a mutual feeling that I know many actors who would like to do my work. The places that they can afford to work, which pay them well enough, are places like "South Coast Repertory," "The Mark Taper Forum," "San Diego Repertory," all of which are mainstream houses. Although my plays receive readings and serious considerations, they have yet to be produced in L.A. The plays are of the size and of the caliber that to do them on a community level is fine for smaller towns. That is fine for me because I always want the work to get out, but the level of acting that I would like to have and the quality of production that I would like to have means that I have to work at those larger theaters.For the most part when they decide to do the work, they know two names, Culture Clash and Luis Valdez. If they know other names, they will pick other plays usually if they find them not threatening in any way. If you attempt to be a playwright who writes about themes that are more confrontational, a mainstream theater is very nervous about taking a risk with their largely Anglo-dominated

audiences because they feel it could be a financial failure. So people like Valdez are shoe-ins because his name will bring an initial audience to them regardless of the quality of the work. That has not changed. There are other fine playwrights in my situation who are encountering those same obstacles. I find that my hands are tied. I find it very lucky that I work with a resident theater company, BRAVA for women in the arts. With them I can cultivate the work and receive high quality openings so I could see the work to fruition. But after that. . . But the politics of it are very frustrating.

M.: **I think it would be frustrating as you are writing.**

C.: Well, I think I am lucky in the sense that I have a place to produce my work. That is a big deal since most playwrights do not even have that. I feel very fortunate that I have a home base company that will support my work. Other places like "Berkeley Repertory" have commissioned me. So things are beginning to loosen up. But if I did not have a company where the work would be produced, then I think it is hard to envision the work. The material conditions affect what you are capable of envisioning. The fact that I feel safe to envision because I have a chance of acquiring a good production through BRAVA has helped the work continue to develop. Otherwise why do it if your work is going to stay on the page.

M.: **What kind of political work do you think *teatro* does versus say poetry or short stories? Do you think it has different political possibilities?**

C.: Well, there are but it is problematic because technically it is a great form because you do not have to be literate to go to the theater. It can reach bodies of people that it would not normally reach, but unfortunately the way most theater is set up now the audiences tend to be exclusive. The good thing now about the *teatro* BRAVA where I work is that it always spends an equal amount of time, money and energy trying to cultivate the audiences. If it is a Latino play, they cultivate Latino audiences. An Asian-American play cultivates that respective audience. On one level, theater is very exclusive. The play runs for five weeks and nobody sees it. On another it has the possibility of being more accessible than anything on the printed page. My family is a good example. My parents' generation never read any of my work, but when I started writing plays all of them wanted to come and be there because it is something that is available to them.

J.: **What inspired you to write your first play *Giving up the Ghost* after the poetry and essay form in *Loving in the War Years* ?**

C.: The Corky character [the main protagonist] came to me. I did not do anything. I was really excited about her because she was not me. She was someone else that I admired. As I said at UCLA, much of it is related to my own biography in the sense

that I had been involved with a woman who was ostensibly heterosexual. That was the first time it had ever happened to me and I could not understand heterosexual desire. Yet, somehow by touching this person I knew it was true. I had to understand that. As a lesbian writer, I felt as if I was not going to be able to go any further as a Chicana lesbian writer. I was not going to be able to reach other Chicanas if I could not understand heterosexual Chicanas. If I could not write for heterosexual Chicanas, I was going to be a very limited writer. I had to understand all female desire, not just lesbian desire. In fact I started to understand that lesbian desire is so influenced by heterosexual desire that I also needed that heterosexual understanding in order to understand my own lesbianism. In writing the character of Amalia, I became conscious of the fact that I needed to write this so I could understand all women. After that, the experience did help me because the transition to *Shadow of a Man* became easy. I could write about the mother, the aunt and everyone else. Whereas when I started writing in the first ten years, my lesbianism was so embattled, having to write and speak its name was so embattled that there was no room for anything else. When I finished *Loving in the War Years*, there became room. Then the voice broadened. It is interesting that you can be accused that you are betraying lesbianism because you write about heterosexual concerns without realizing that I should be able to write about a white heterosexual man. My job is to write it all well and to expand what I am capable of doing so that when I write the Chicana lesbian experience, it is informed.

J.: ***In Giving Up the Ghost* one of the last lines is "making familia from scratch." What does that mean to you?**

C.: When the character says it, it means that you cannot make peace with your biological family when your queerness makes it impossible for you to fit. As a Chicana lesbian, the character Marisa has a love for family that is so profound because she was Corky as a child. Her love of family, her loyalty to her sister, her mother, her race and everything betray her. She is betrayed by her mother, her cousin, her first lover, the man who rapes her and more. She is betrayed by all these so-called family members who betray her love. As an adult Marisa says, "OK. I am not giving up family. I need family. But if I have to make family from scratch, that is what I will do." What that means is that she will create her own queer family. That is why Amalia plays the mother role too because Marisa is young enough that she is still looking for her mother in her lovers which I think is typical. In that last monologue she says, "If I have to, I will." But if you notice the last gesture of the play where she is making love to herself, she says, "If I put my fingers to my own forgotten places," it means where you begin to make family from scratch is the love of yourself and then you begin to reconstruct.

J.: **I was also very moved by the reading you did of a selection in *The Last Generation*, your latest book, at UCLA. You implied that the Chicano culture**

is disappearing. Could you expand on this issue?

C.: Well I am talking about my own family that is not necessarily representative of all Chicanos. There are plenty of Chicanos who are cultivating themselves fine. Witnessing that loss in my own family was very personal. However, I know that I am not alone. Many Chicanos are experiencing that phenomenon. What keeps the culture cultivated is contact with new generations of mexicanos coming into the country. But if you don't have that what keeps it cultivated is a political movement that affirms the culture. That is the reason my niece who is quarter-breed is now taking Chicano studies classes. There is no reason for her to do that. She can get along perfectly well in life without ever recognizing the quarter Mexican she is. It is just that somewhere along the course of history, she might perceive something valuable in that culture. Why does my nephew wish suddenly that he were darker? It is very confusing since society works hard to get everyone "whitified." What was once denigrated is suddenly given value which makes you attracted to it. The way you make it attractive is by having available to young people the culture--literature and the arts.

That is why the arts are so important. My frustrations about most Chicano Studies Programs are that they only cultivate the social sciences. Nobody is encouraging artists, writers and dreamers. Nobody is cultivating dreamers. What exactly is the new generation supposed to be drawn to? Are they supposed to be drawn to being social workers and sociologists? Every single one of them? What people are drawn to is what moves them! What they remember is a song! What they remember is a painting! What they remember is some crazy poet one day!

That is the reason the sixties and the seventies were such an active time too. It is not just because there was a political movement happening, but there was a cultural movement to enhance that political movement. It is very important. I feel that when the activism may not be there the reason they keep the arts alive until the activism kicks in again.

M.: **Is that what you mean by cultural nationalism--the arts and literature?**

C.: No, I am talking about a land-based movement in organizing our communities.

M.: **When you say that you had to come out of the closet as a cultural nationalist, is that because so much Chicana feminism has defined itself as critiquing nationalism?**

C.: Yeah, and I do too. I'm a bit tongue and cheek. I like to mess that way because people take it all so seriously. The cultural nationals expect that myself as a lesbian feminist would not have strong feelings about Aztlán, connections about a land-based movement, indigenous rights or sovereignty. They assume that, as a lesbian feminist, I am excluded from those kinds of concerns. Chicana feminists question

how I could be attracted to that race politics.

M.: **How do you reconcile your different views in the essay entitled "Queer Aztlán" of *The Last Generation*?**

C.: It is supposed to be a breeding ground for ideas and to agitate. There is one person who likes a little bit of this or a little bit of that. Why can't we have it all? Even though on a pragmatic level, this may be very difficult to realize. Yet, I wanted to put between the pages of one essay a whole range of issues of which I believe in which most people may find contradictory. For example, I may share a politics with José Montoya, but then does he share my lesbian feminism? No he does not. Still that is something that he should know that I share with him. What does it mean that a lesbian feminist shares that politics? It is asking, "Hey, come along with this part." The same experience occurs with the lesbian feminists. They think I must think X, Y, Z, but then I say that I thought Aztlán had some really good ideas. I don't want to lose both aspects. I think there is something really important about the unabashed radicalism of that nationalist period-uncompromising, because I always feel that one ends up compromising. There is something about being that cutting edge.
Also there is an indigenous internationalist movement happening at this moment in which Chicanos can have a place in that if they are willing to carry that responsibility.

M.: **Is an international movement one of the things that gives you the most hope?**

C.: Yes, it is. I feel that it is also an alternative way of living from the most simple level to the most global. That gives me hope. Changes can actually happen on an immediate basis on how people construct their own communities from the local to the global. When I look around that does inspire me.

M.: **In that movement, who are you thinking of?**

C.: All of the material from *The Last Generation* was written during the Quincentennial. There were many international indigenous tribunals that were happening at the time. I know of individuals--Native women in Canada, in the United States and Latin America who are building coalitions with each other. They are also creating self-sustaining cottage industries, for example, in Texas, indigenous women are working for water and land rights in a legal context from the national to the local level. Much of the work is geared by and for women. To me these are very inspiring examples to everyone.
Of course there is always that big rip-off that happens to Native culture which to me is only a reflection of the kind of power it has, the fact that people want to steal it.

J.: **Have you read the *testimonio* by Rigoberta Menchú? What impact did it have on you?**

C.: Yeah, that book changed my life just by virtue of the fact that you had a testimony like that on a very concrete, very real-life level that really made explicit the complicity the United States had in the particular conditions of people who are ostensibly related to you. The element that really drew me was that I always taught it at U.C. Berkeley. Every semester, this book turned the students into radicals overnight. I had a student whose parents were *Somocistas* but then he was turned around by this book. You cannot ignore it. It is impossible to conceive of anyone suffering to that extent and to know what a cushy life one has. There is no way to read that and not feel that you are somehow complicit in that woman's suffering or her family's suffering. But that little seed of realization never leaves you in a very important way. It is wonderful to teach it.

Mary Pat Brady
Juanita Heredia

University of California, Los Angeles

East of Downtown and Beyond
Interview with Helena María Viramontes

A native of East Los Angeles, Helena María Viramontes has participated in many journals, literary contests, and community activities. She is best known for her internationally acclaimed *The Moths and Other Stories* published in 1985 by Arte Público Press. This collection of short stories brings to light the importance of the urban woman's voice, concerns, and perspectives within Chicano/Latino culture. Viramontes calls attention to the themes of sexuality in "Growing" and "Birthday," changing cultural/sexual roles in "The Broken Web," the relationships among women in "The Moths," and the immigrant experience in "Cariboo Café."

In *Chicana Creativity and Criticism: Charting New Frontiers in American Literature* (1987), Viramontes and María Herrera-Sobek coedited a collection of critical articles, fiction, poetry, and essays on Chicana literature, a project that was inspired by a conference held at U.C. Irvine. The book proved to be very popular and recently sold out. The University of New Mexico Press will reissue the book in an expanded edition. In this collection, the short story "Miss Clairol" by Viramontes shows a new direction in the representation of the urban female factory worker in Chicano/Latino literature according to Herrera-Sobek. In "Nopalitos" (*Breaking Boundaries: Writings by Latinas* 1989), Viramontes cultivates the testimonial genre by giving us an autobiographical account of the importance of the oral tradition in her work.

Viramontes has been literary editor for *Xhismearte* and a coordinator for the Latino Writers Association. In 1990 she cofounded the nonprofit group, Latino Writers and Filmmakers, Inc. She has recently signed a contract for two novels and a book of short stories with New American Library Series/Dutton Publishers. She is presently working on a novel, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, to be published in 1995 with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts. Viramontes has also accepted a ladder-rank position as Assistant Professor of Creative Writing in the Department of English at Cornell University.

As one of the participants at the conference "Writing the Immigrant Experience" at the renovated public library in downtown Los Angeles, Viramontes reflected on the significance of the public library in her literary formation. Later on that afternoon, we met with Viramontes to discuss her role as a writer and a

community activist.

Viramontes elaborated on the importance of her involvement with the public library. We asked her why this place means so much to her.

Helena: I'm a big advocate of public libraries because I grew up in a bookless home. I come from a family of eleven. It wasn't until my older brothers and sisters started going to school that there were books in the house. My father had bought us a set of *World Book Encyclopedias* that we were forbidden to touch because they hadn't been paid. Also my older sister had a *Bible* she guarded like her big jar of *Noxzema*. I was amazed by the pictures in this book and the temptation was too much for me to bear. For the longest time I thought that the encyclopedias contained all the information I needed to know in the world, and that the *Bible* had all the truth. What more could a hungry child want? That's all I really needed. It wasn't until very recently that I realized that this isn't altogether true. But that's where I developed my respect for the printed word. In any event, I was always really excited about books.

The library was my space. I would take two buses to come here to the Central Library. It was very much unlike the way it is now. You would walk into this huge domelike room and in it were rows and rows of catalogue card drawers and all those cards represented books ready to be accessed by the tip of my fingers. You're constantly moving, but you have to make contacts and connections. I like that thought because in many ways that's the way it was at the public library. I met all kinds of different people and worlds in this library.

Juanita: **What do you remember about the library as a child**?

H.: First of all, it was a place of warmth, great warmth. Someone always kept the heat just right. And nobody bothered you. And then to see the big huge boxes with catalogue cards in them and jot the numbers and go to the stacks and say *¡Ay! como tenían tantos libros* and then just pile them up. These many books [she extends her hands]. To go and sit down with them. There was always a homeless person or two or three or five or ten, either sleeping, reading or looking at odd things. I remember seeing some old lady reading page after page of old *T.V. Guides*, while another time, I saw some *viejito* reading a foreign book, but he was holding it backwards. I thought all this was so fascinating. It's always been my quiet, tripping out space, the library.

Silvia: **What did you read**?

H.: I liked reading about people's lives, biographies. I would read fiction and magazines but it was mostly biographies I remember. At that time I was very much struck by people's lives. I also read about California history. They had a California room where I would read sections of history books. More than anything else, I just

enjoyed the freedom to be able to have access to these things, to pick a book on Harriet Tubman or Marilyn Monroe or whatever my heart desired. Nobody bothered me. It was incredible. That is basically what writers seek, you know: a little space. A little non-distractive time to be able to think or feel whatever you want.

J.: **What kinds of community services have you done with the public library?**

H.: Last year, for example, they started closing down public libraries. There was one public library in particular that I adopted. It was called *Friendly Stop Library* in the City of Orange. It's a barrio library. It's a trailer that pretty much served the small barrio there. I loved the work that they were doing. The librarian who worked there was a Chicano. One day I visited the library at about 3:30 in the afternoon. It was packed. All sorts of kids were there, reading, looking at magazines. I mean it was a place where the community came together, almost like a teen post, but the kids were reading or doing homework.
The librarian was able to disseminate the books that were relevant to the kids' cultures and concerns. It was a wonderful, wonderful place that belonged to them. Well sure enough they were going to close it up. I just couldn't believe this so I wrote this letter to all my friends. I said, "Listen, here *compas*. I mean we need to do something here. Don't you remember how important the libraries were to a lot of us because we just did not have enough books available to us?" And so on. I must have made about 75 copies of the letter and sent them out to all my friends who sent them out to their friends. Well, sure enough, the response was so big that the library was awarded another grant. All I did was write a letter and it worked. A lot of the writers, especially the Latino writers, responded. That was really, really very nice. It was wonderful to see that everybody took the time to write letters to say "Don't do this. This is really important. This is my own personal experience at the public library." Libraries have always been very close to my heart.
When you grow up in a family of eleven in a three bedroom house in East L.A. where do you study? I mean where can you go to study? *En la cocina*. Yeah, *bueno* after you wash the dishes. You know what I mean? The library also provided me with a place to exercise my imagination. I could sit for hours, read, sleep, and nobody bothered me. Plus I had access to the information that I wanted to have access to. It was really great.

S.: **When did you start to write?**

H.: I started writing seriously after college. Actually I did write a play in my drama class in high school. The play even had an underlying feminism that was subconscious. It dealt with the lives of five prostitutes. I mean what can I say? I was a high school student at the time. Ms. Duran, our Chicana drama teacher, said, "We are not going to censor here. You write whatever you want to write. And if you want to use curse words, you could use curse words." *¡Ay! Bueno*. You should have seen all the

pieces that the students did. It was not so much the permission to use bad words, but the freedom to write unrestrictively. Mine was one that was selected to be read.

S.: **What were your college years like? Did you write then?**

H.: In 1971, I got accepted to this small, four-year, liberal arts college called Immaculate Heart College in Hollywood. People like Diane Keaton's sister for example and Mary Tyler Moore graduated from there. It was small, but very, very radical. The first year I attended, Tom Hayden came to teach there. What a controversy that was! *Las mujeres*, a lot of them called themselves nuns, had their own communities of sisters. It was my understanding that some of them were excommunicated from the Church for their radicalism. Nonetheless, they defined themselves, created their own communities of spirituality and although the school closed its doors, the community of women still offered a graduate course in feminist spirituality. Very interesting women.
As a student, I was hungry for the information they had to share. But going there I realized in many ways how the system had failed me in terms of not being prepared. There were five Chicanas and three Black women and we hung out like this, man. We were like this [a sign of unity]. In fact, Eloise Klein Healy, who was one of my teachers back then, came up to me after class once and asked: "God, we want to know what you guys are thinking about." We felt so intimidated, unprepared, and we always sat in the back really tight-lipped. But I have to hand it to Eloise; years later I thanked her. She was the first white woman who asked me what I thought. It was a terrifying experience coming into this white upper middle-class university because all of us came from very different backgrounds. It was an incredible experience.

J.: **How did your family react when you decided to continue your education** ?

H.: I explained a little about my background in terms of the workload I had at the house. I remember getting up at five and helping my mother with the lunches, getting ready for school, going to school, coming home. She only let me take drama once a week the last year of high school. We weren't allowed to have after school activities. I had to come home, help with the dinner and then wash dishes. After eight or nine o'clock, I did my homework until about midnight. Then I'd go to sleep. I always remember saying a prayer, "Oh God, thank you for this day. Sleep is the best thing until five o'clock." I knew then that if I was going to go to a college or a university I would not be able to do it at the house because there was no space. That's when I realized, I needed to move into a dorm. At Immaculate Heart College, they gave me a room at the dorms. I was seventeen years old, and needed signed permission. My father, of course, said I would move out over his dead body. So I turned to my mother, who hardly went against my father. However, I used a different strategy. I asked her, "*Mamá*, do you want me to marry a doctor or lawyer?" How

could a caring mother not respond affirmatively. "*¡Pues, sí!*" she said. Then I posed to her, "How can I meet these doctors and lawyers if I don't go to where they are studying?" All I had to do next is show my mother where to sign.

My roommate, this woman from Pacific Palisades, reminded me of Janis Joplin. She was a very rebellious wild person and that's why she fell in love with me because she said, "Come on over here. We're probably the same thing." So I ended up rooming with her. Two weeks later my parents come to check everything out. All my mother kept saying was "*¿Onde están las monjitas, onde están las monjitas?*" She was waiting for the nuns to come out and greet her. "*Pues allá están*, Mom, *es que están estudiando*," I said. God, it was crazy, crazy. Yeah, I remember those days. I always remember those days.

S.: **Why are those days significant?**

H.: It was hilarious because in many ways they were the most critical days of intellectualism that I had. When I talk to students especially, I tell them that this is an opportunity for them to get the information that they are going to need for the rest of their lives. When I was visiting Harvard and Yale, the first thing I did was check out the libraries. I'm thinking, hey, we need to have that too. This belongs to us too. We need to have access to this information.

J.: **Could you talk about your role as literary editor in *XhismeArte*, the Latino literary and art magazine of Los Angeles? How did you contribute?**

H.: Sure. I was involved from 1978 to 1981. Through informal literary workshops, about 25 writers met and shared their fiction works. I worked with the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Víctor Manuel Valle. We worked together submitting grants and receiving money to hold these literary workshops.

In 1981, I coordinated a special issue dedicated to *La Mujer* in an attempt to recognize and bring into perspective our creative force. I was the only woman on the editorial staff who brought forth particular gender issues. I can now say that this issue was a valuable and historical contribution to the Chicano/Latino literary tradition. The issue *La Mujer* was a publication designed for a special anthology, *Homenaje a la Ciudad de Los Angeles 1781-1981*. In this issue, we wanted to emphasize the other side of literary history that noticed *La Mujer* as an organizer as well as a worker in the fields and factories, a planner of revolutions, a generator of ideas, traditions, cultures, beliefs as well as propagator of her race. The one-dimensional depiction of *La Mujer* in the arts and literature did not do justice to her. While the Anglo described her as dark and lustful with a sexual appetite, the Chicano/Latino painted her as strong, but sexless, or sensual but intellectually sterile. *La Mujer* knows better. Both Barbara Carrasco, who was the art editor, and myself agreed to collaborate on this issue that celebrated *La Mujer*.

A writer voices the lives and future of Chicanas/Latinas. In a society that represents

inferiority by race and intelligence by sex, she must struggle endlessly to create forms and ideas against those negative images that portray her. We are powerful warriors because we can teach. In order to continue to develop our art, we must be connected to other women *artistas*. In a similar fashion, we must keep in touch with the men of our culture, educating them about the condition of *La Mujer* so that we can form a collective voice, a literary and artistic consciousness for the good of all. Some of the contributors of *La Mujer* issue, who were relatively unknown at the time, included Rosa Elvira Alvarez, Alma Villanueva, Lin Romero, Gina Valdés, and myself. The works we presented capture a reality often perceived as harsh and bitter, but honest. The art included wonderful work by Carrasco, Yreina Cervantes and Linda Vallejo.

J.: **How did the Latino Writers Association form?**

H.: This collectivity of writers grew out of the workshops we held for *Xhismearte* and speared by Valle. More than anything, its purpose was to provide critical and moral support so necessary for the development of *artistas*. It was a stimulating environment where an exchange of ideas, constructive criticism, and exploration of intellectual conversations took place. We had a grand vision. Víctor Manuel Valle, others and I met every Thursday religiously for about three years. At times it was frustrating because I was the only *mujer* in this community of writers. That is how we came up with the idea of *La Mujer* issue for *Xhismearte*.

J.: **Focusing more on your own development, who did you read?**

H.: When I was in college I was reading a lot of African-American writers like Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright. Anglo women writers like Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf. And, of course, the regulars of American literature. African-American women writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker came a little bit later. Angela Davis had an impact on me as well. I was very impressed by that kind of radical atmosphere of writing your roots and yourself and the urban city plight.
What also struck me at the time was the Latin American writers and their works: *One Hundred Years of Solitude, Pedro Páramo.* I had been reading a lot but this was so different than anything that I had ever read. It was so enjoyable. It was the type of reading that just drew me in. I just forgot about the hours. I was no longer reading but in the world of these writers, experiencing the sights and scents. Words no longer got in the way of the stories, you know what I mean? Oh! What a wonderful thing! I can't even describe it, to be in another world completely and not let anybody distract you from it until you are out of it. That's what I got from a lot of these Latin American writers. Now it's interesting that I probably would have started writing a lot sooner had I been exposed to Latin American women writers. But by and large I was exposed to the male writers because it was they who were being translated. I was very fascinated by their technique, by their storytelling, by the way they

narrated, by their information. Yet I still didn't think of writing on my own.

J.: **What was the impact of reading *Pedro Páramo* ?**

H.: Once I finished *Pedro Paramo*, that's when I wrote my first short story, "Requiem for the Poor," which is about Chicanos and their parents, the cultural conflicts, and crossing the border from Tijuana. At the time, I took a creative writing course at Cal State L.A. where I wrote this short narrative. That's a little story in which I tried to do a Juan Rulfoesque kind of atmosphere. My professor said, "Submit it to the magazine." Sure, you know I'll submit it. And then I got a first place fiction award.
In *Pedro Páramo*, I admired the ghostlike consciousness he created and the blurry line between reality and phantoms. The form of the narrative and the art of telling a story amazed me most of all. As a reader, I enjoyed putting the pieces of the puzzle together. It was a mystery to me. There is a fine line between realism and magic. I am talking about the magic in curiosity and awareness of the reader's eye who learns to trust.

S.: **When was that?**

H.: This was in 1975 or 76. Still in his class, the professor asked us to write about something that felt personal to me. So I opened up my journal and I picked out a thing that happened to me. And in fact it was almost like a two or three day long monologue, which turned out to be "Birthday." In this story, I experimented with stream of consciousness. I combine the cosmic and the personal. As a writer, I tried to concern myself with how to tell a story as well as the subject matter of abortion and women's bodies. After I submitted this piece, my professor said to me, "You know you have such a unique vision. I have never read anything like this before." I began thinking, well, let me try my hand at writing.

J.: **Speaking of the printed word, I find this rebellious spirit in many of your female characters. How does this relate to your writing process?**

H.: The rebellion in my soul is not apparent to me until I see it in my characters. You know it's interesting because when I was writing *Under the Feet of Jesus* I wrote to Sandra [Cisneros]: "You know, Sandra, I am a grateful woman for many things. But one thing I'm very thankful for are these characters. Though one thinks I gave them life, it is they who have given me life." That's the way I feel. Writing is so basic and so part of my own development as a human being that this is what I want to offer my readers too.

J.: **How did you come up with the idea to do "The Moths" , one of your most famous stories which is published in numerous anthologies?**

H.: The emotion comes from a very famous black and white *Life* magazine photo of a Japanese woman bathing her deformed child. I was overpowered by the love I saw between this mother and her child. While the child looks into space, the mother shows such love and compassion in bathing the child. I felt the strength of bonding, love and trust between the two. I wanted to capture this feeling in the relationship between the grandmother and her grandchild in *The Moths*. I chose the grandmother figure instead of the mother figure because she has more time to take care of the spirituality of the children. The mother figure is too close a generation to relate to her rebellious daughter. This story is a tribute to grandparents and the role they play in our lives. I also show that these people have real lives with complexities. There are no easy solutions.

J.: **This composite of characters in difficult situations is apparent in most of your works. In "The Broken Web," how did you develop these intense characters?**

H.: I was always fascinated by women's stories. The idea for "The Broken Web" was given to me by this woman I knew. I went to the court and investigated her court records. It was an incredible story. Her experience reminded me of the movie, *Dance with a Stranger*. It's an interesting movie because it deals with this woman who works at a bar. She is also very confident about her sexuality. She is a single parent and she is doing well. But then she just falls in love with the wrong guy. They become obsessed with each other. They terrorize each other but then they can't live without each other. They are always drawn back to each other for one reason or another. In our lives, at least in the women that I've talked to, there's always been that occasion at one point in somebody's life, where you have this relationship in which you become obsessed with this person, including myself. Getting back to the story, she ended up killing the guy by shooting him so that she could be released emotionally. But the fascinating part is that she wrote a letter. She was the first woman in England tobe hung, by the way. That's why they wrote a movie about it. But the fascinating part of the letter was that she wrote to his mother to say she loved him, but he just couldn't keep his pants on. He always kept wanting relationships with other women. Very interesting movie.
I see the parallel in "The Broken Web," though I didn't see this woman until years and years later. This woman's husband terrorized her by doing horrible things to her and her children. That's when she just got the rifle not more than ten feet away and pulled the trigger once, twice and then reloaded. Did it again. Then she was tried. She was tried first for homicide but then the story began to unravel the torment. She got secondary manslaughter. She had written a *testimonio* in her *pocho* English of how much she loved her husband, but why she had to do what she did. I was so fascinated by that. I thought, "Oh, shoot! I want to write this in her voice. *Y no lo podía hacer*. I could not do it. Maybe I still will. Because it was so fascinating to have

that kind of voice.

S.: **Why did you choose the daughter's voice**?

H.: Well the daughter is the one who told me about her mother. After I interviewed her mother I got the court transcripts. Because in a way, I felt a certain amount of responsibility to tell about this past nobody knew about. But when the daughter confessed it to me, she had to be very discrete. Then I asked her, "Do you think your Mom would talk to me about this so I could write something on it?" And she said, "Yeah, I think so. Let's talk to her." So I talked to that person. I got the court case first and then I returned to talk to that woman. But even then it was a very delicate balance that I had to take because I was really transgressing a lot of intimate information. But these women were very good about this mixed report. They even told me about some of the things that this man did. Even then the daughter instead of the mother would tell me about some of the things that she could not talk about.

J.: **Was it difficult to find a publisher for *The Moths and Other Stories* at this time considering there were not many established Chicana/Latina writers**?

H.: Why do you think we had such magazines as *XhismeArte*, and *Con Safos*? We just took publications into our own hands. Remember we had a group of Latino writers here in the association. We had people like Luis Rodríguez, *Always Running*, Luis. Luis was able to develop a panel of Latino writers to participate in an American Writers Congress which was held in New York. That was the first major conference with a Latino panel in years by American writers. Luis asked me to participate in the panel with Nick Kanellos whom I was just beginning to know through some of the books by Arte Público.

At the panel, I met Nick Kanellos for the first time. He was screaming and yelling. It's funny because when I share this story with everybody, they all say they have stories of Nick Kanellos. He was very upset because there were not many Latino writers invited, just a handful, a speck such as Rudolfo Anaya, myself, and a few others.

In any event, as we sat together, I leaned over and said "I have all these stories that I've written over the years. Maybe I can put them in a collection." He said, "Yeah, yeah, go ahead. Mail them to me." That was back in 1981. It didn't get published until 1985. It took a long time. At that time it took about two or three years to get a book out. I got the book on the very same day I brought my son Francisco home from the hospital. *Y me habló* Nick's public relation agent to set up a reading. I said that I couldn't because I had just come home from the hospital. "Are you okay?" she asked. "Yeah, I just had a baby." Shortly afterwards Denise's [Chávez] book *The Last of the Menu Girls* came. Denise and I actually did our tour together around Texas. That's how Denise and I got hooked up together.

While they [Cisneros and Chávez] continued to write, my writing still went up and

down, sporadic in many ways. I have always written but I've just done it in short terms. Shortly before the book *The Moths* was published, "The Cariboo Cafe" was not even going to be included. I put it in as a last minute entry because another story, a love story about these two Chicano teachers at Garfield High School, was a weak link in the book.

J.: "Cariboo Café" is another significant landmark in expressing the concerns of the Latino immigrant experience. How did this idea come about?

H.: I was living in Vancouver at the time and I had just had Pilar. I became very obsessively involved with the politics of Central America. The *New York Times* did not provide sufficient information concerning Central America. I read a lot more through the Canadian papers. I was thinking, "My God, don't people in the U.S. know what's going on?" I kept a journal, mostly notes. On a personal level, my motherly instinct to protect my child became inherently stronger as well as my rage. For "The Cariboo Cafe" I did background reading. One day I started with this voice, a man's voice and the way he sees these particular people. The story is divided into three sections. I wrote the second section first, the third section second, and then the first section last. Not only was I developing the voice of the man, but I was also creating the story. I wanted readers to become part of the story, to stand there and witness what was going on. I managed to bring the readers in; they are the bystanders at the end of the story looking into the *café* in silence. At the same time, I wanted them to experience the pain of this woman in losing a child senselessly, a fact that was happening left and right in Central America.

That story took me a long time to do, because the story line was very difficult and very painful. At times, I cried as I was writing it. Other times, I even had nightmares about it. I remember one night when I woke up screaming because I saw this man take my child and run away. I was running. I was touching her fingertips. She was reaching out to me. I was running faster. It scared the hell out of me. I got up screaming. I did not know the power of the story or what I was doing but I felt that I needed to do something. I needed to do something fast to recognize the suffering of these women who were very much silenced because people were not covering this type of material in their articles.

I finished the piece in San Francisco. In fact, I had written the piece when Pilar would sleep and then I would get up and work for an hour and then suddenly she would wake up. The pattern would repeat itself. I remember the time I finished it. It was three o'clock in the morning. I was supposed to take a plane at seven o'clock that same morning to go to Long Beach because they had invited me to this Women Writers Conference. I wanted to finish the piece because I had not done anything new in a long time. While Pilar was sitting in my backpack, I was typing away. She eventually fell asleep at about four thirty. I put her back to bed, packed my stuff, and then I was off. I didn't have time to consider the impact that the story had on me until I got to the place where I was supposed to read it.

This was in 1984. There were two hundred women and then we each divided into groups. I did not know at the time that Tillie Olsen was in my audience. As I began reading the story, I literally fell apart. I began sobbing and sobbing because the pain was so close to my heart. It was an incredible experience. I kept crying and couldn't stop. When I finished the story, I felt like such a fool until I looked up. Everyone in the room was crying. People had tears rolling down their eyes. I just could not believe it.

I did not know who Tillie Olsen was physically, but I knew and admired her as a writer. She came up to me, took my hand and said "I'm so glad you're writing this. Nobody has ever written this kind of work. This is so special." So I said, "Thank you, thank you. What's your name?" She said, "Tillie Olsen." Later on that day, in her keynote speech she said, "I have just been to an incredible reading of a story. I think this is what we have to be writing about, the important aspects of life that we have to put down on paper." I decided to send this story to Nick telling him to pull out the other story and put this one in. So that's how "The Cariboo Cafe" got into this book. I'm glad that it did because it's a good story. It's also one that I could never read out publicly. I tried other times but I decided that I better not do it.

J.: **In "Nopalitos," you experiment with another genre, the *testimonio*. It's really moving. What motivated this change?**

H.: Let me tell you. During those crazy times, when I was not actually writing, I was keeping journals. I was reading, basically keeping a time of silence. Those years that passed were really hard for me. When somebody contacted me and asked, "Why don't you write a *testimonio*?" I could not even come up with the time to do it. I was sorry that they wanted me to do it.

During that time I got a call from the Chicano Literary Prize, which I had won a few years back at Irvine. They asked me if I had wanted to be the keynote speaker along with Tomás Rivera. "Are you talking to me?" I asked. "Aren't you Helena María Viramontes?" they asked. I was vacuuming at the time. It was hilarious. I immediately put some thoughts together because I did not have that much time to prepare. I would write sentences on postits, to put here and to put there. Then I just typed it up in four hours. It's good that I did that because that was the basis of "Nopalitos."

This incident is interesting because I did the presentation on Wednesday with Tomás Rivera. By Sunday, he died of a heart attack. It was incredible. The spirits have a way of pointing me out to people and being where I should be. It was so strange that I should be there with him and that we should talk and a few days later he's gone. It was very sad because we were making a date to meet in a couple of weeks.

From taking those notes that I did for "Nopalitos," María [Herrera-Sobek] said that they were very good. But I was pissed off that I did not have enough time to sit down and write.

One day Nancy Sternbach called me to say that she really wanted me to do the *testimonio* for this anthology. I said OK that I would sit down that afternoon, type it up, and work from my notes. While my husband watched the kids, it took me about four hours to put everything together and send it out. The next day I regretted it completely. I said, "Oh! How could I have possibly sent her this! Oh! This is terribly written! What can I say? What can I do?" A couple of days later she calls me back. She says, "Helena, we loved it. We loved it." That was the product of just a few hours work, but it wasn't really. The thoughts and ideas had already been there. There were minimal changes done. I like it a lot. It gives tribute to my mother, that's what it does and the importance of growing up hearing stories.

S.: **Are you working more on "Miss Clairol"? I loved that story. The sympathy you have for that character, Arlene.**

H.: The series of Paris Rats? I would like to continue. I really respect Arlene. It is interesting because I received a lot of flack especially from the outer circles. "*Ay!* Look at the way you are portraying a Chicana! Look, she's stealing lipstick in front of her kids!" I asked "Don't you understand? *No tiene dinero.* Geez. Don't you understand that she is a young woman *también que trabaja* like you would not believe. Yeah, she wants to go out. Yeah, she wants to have a good time. A life!" Anyway, yeah, I have to get back to the series. There's a couple of stories that need to be reworked and there is a couple that need to be written.

S.: **Have you tried experimenting with other genres, theater for example?**

H.: I see myself writing film. I am very interested in developing a script that I did at the Sundance Institute. It deals with a *mexicana* who is known as the first convicted felon in Orange County. *Pobre mujer.* I feel that I have to vindicate her. Her name was Modesta Avila. The only existing picture we have of her is the photo that was taken at San Quentin. This woman owned a little patch of land in 1884, *algo así.* The railroads were invading very fast, Huntington being one of the big railroad magnates. They wanted to draw a straight line, a boundary through California. They wanted to cross her land. At first, she said, "No!" But then she changed her mind and said, "OK, but give me some money." They said, "No!" She ended up going to the courts complaining that they were building on her land and not giving her any kind of compensation. The courts did not pay any attention to her. The story has it (which captured my imagination) that she hung a laundry line across the railroad tracks though the court records say otherwise. She had *calzones* telling them "Fuckers! I'm going to dry my laundry." The courts got so pissed off that they arrested her. They tried her and then she was acquitted. Because she was acquitted, she was tried again until they found her guilty of obstruction of the railroad. She was given three years in San Quentin. She was pregnant at the time. Of course, she died up there. Who knows what happened to her child? I was able to get her picture from a

wonderful woman who did some research on her. I blew it up and she's staring at me everyday. Waiting with such mournful eyes.
So I wrote this piece for the Sundance Institute that I plan to develop and make it into a real great story. It really needs to be told. I am told that some of her family still live. The descendants of the Avila don't talk about her. They say that she is not part of the family or that she is another string of Avila or whatever because she is a convicted criminal. *Pobrecita*, you should see her. She is so *triste*. It was really the railroad magnates who just wanted to get their way. Then it was Orange County that had developed its own county away from Los Angeles and wanted to show that they were good, law abiding citizens. The people in town treated her terribly. They said that she was famous with the "Santa Ana boys all over town," this kind of b.s. Yeah, of course. Basically they were representing her like a lying slut. This woman had a lot of guts, a lot of spunk. So I see myself doing this in film, but there are so many stories that I could develop.

J.: **How did you become involved with the Sundance Institute?**

H.: As you may know, Gabo [Gabriel García Márquez] is a supporter of the Havana Film School. Robert Redford, an admirer of Gabo, was successful in getting him a visa to stay in the USA for this workshop he was putting together in 1989. Gabo agreed to come as long as he could work with five U.S. Latino writers. This was also part of the Latin American exchange program he had set up. That was the first stipulation. So then a big national pool of Latino writers submitted their best works. I did not think I would be nominated because I was not really a film, but a fiction writer and I also knew I was competing against major people. When I was finally accepted, I had to decline the offer at first. They gave me the business about my lacking a "proper" Spanish. Well, I gave them a history about the Chicano Movement and the condition of the working-class Latinos in the U.S. At the time, I was also living in Nuevo México with my kids and I could not just get up and go to the Sundance Institute in Utah. Gabo was so accommodating that it was hilarious. He said that I could bring my kids along and that I could speak in English if I wanted. So now I had no more excuses.
It was an incredible experience. Everyday from 9 am to 1 pm, Gabo instructed us to come in with a storyline that we discussed, pulling and challenging our imagination. Again I was in that literary environment where we exchanged ideas and I became familiar with the literary traditions and concerns of other Latino writers, Cubans, Nuyoricans. I also learned that Gabo was a very loving and sweet man. On the last day, he said that he was so sentimental that he did not know how to say good-bye and he left us with tears in his eyes and a wave of his hand. I was very moved.

S.: **What project are you working on now?**

H.: This novel, for example, is very small. But I leave it open for the characters who are so incredibly rich, so incredibly powerful that it calls for other stories. It is called *Under the Feet of Jesus*. It has taken me a little bit over a year to work on a consistent basis. That is why I'm a bit tired. I still have some expansion. In this work, I wanted to give a tribute to the *Mujer*. I wanted to make her fucking tough. And it works! I've received very, very wonderful responses. An editor at Dutton, a woman from New York told me, "I read this and I read it again. It gave me the sense of being a classic." I was in awe. I would not go that far, but if you want to consider it a classic that's OK with me. I told her that when I write I really have to take care of my characters. These are characters that some people have complete stereotypes about or are completely invisible. They have a right to come unto themselves. They have a right to exist, to show people that they love, to show people that they are strong, to show people that they are responsible, to show that they are responsible for the salad on the plates, for instance. Think about it. This woman, this young little Chicanita, comes out so strong. She is incredible. Her name is Estrella. So I feel really good about it.

J.: **By the way, how did you meet Sandra Cisneros?**

H.: Let me tell you. It was destined that Sandra and I should meet and become really good friends. A friend of mine in East L.A. said, "I just picked up this book *The House on Mango Street*. You got to read it, Helena. I thought of you. You got to read it." So then he sends it to me. I read it in one sitting. And I just think, "God, this is fabulous!" And then I am going to read it a second sitting, when another Chicana friend comes along and I said, "Listen, you got to read this book!" So then she takes it along, right. We start talking, we were already talking about "look how interesting she got the folk tales and she turned them into this and really made them real to us. . ." And that's when my friend says, "Well, let me borrow it because I need to use it for my class."

That very day I go home. I go to my mother's house in East L. A. It's late afternoon. As I am walking in, I see that my mother's mailbox door is open, so I get the mail for her. All of a sudden, there's a letter to Helena María Viramontes. The ribbon was all messed up so half of my name came but on the top it had Cisneros, S. Cisneros on it with an address, San Antonio, The Guadalupe Cultural Center. I looked and I said, "I wonder if this is Sandra Cisneros, the person who wrote *The House on Mango Street*." So then I open it and it was Sandra. She said, " I picked up *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* edited by Cherríe Moraga. I read your two stories. I think they're wonderful. I want to invite you down to The Guadalupe Cultural Center." So I called her and I said, "You know it's quite ironic. I just finished your book." I did not get the sense at the time of the real importance of the book, which is incredible. It has already sold tons of copies. It's used in fourth grade classes right now all the way up to adult literacy programs and graduate level courses in literature, cultural, women, and sociology courses because it is so textured. It is so leveled in many,

many ways that there is something for everybody. It will be a timeless piece. Pilar at that time was about seven months old. When we went down to San Antonio, Sandra and I hit it off real fast, *hablando, hablando, hablando*. In fact, she gave me a draft of "One Holy Night" [a story in *Woman Hollering Creek*]. After I read it I knew that she was such an incredible writer.

From then on each time that she would be around California, whether I was living up in San Francisco or back in Irvine, she would call me to make sure that we could meet and spend time together. It was always so nice. She would come over to the house in San Francisco and pull me out. "Come with me! So and so invited me over to go have some *pupusas* at this restaurant. Come with me, Helena." And it was funny because I was pregnant in San Francisco with my second son. Then she came to visit me. She had won the Before Columbus Book Award for *The House on Mango Street*. I always remember. I am in the kitchen about to vomit and she would say, "Hey, listen I met so and so at Stanford. He's going to take me to a jazz club. Come with me. Come on. Come on." And I'm like, "Yeah Sandra, right."

For a number of years, Sandra always kept me connected to writers and the aspect of writing. She would always call me. She would always write to me. Even in the long stretch of time when I was just going crazy with the kids, the evaluation of my life and trying to get it all together, she always reminded me that my writing was important. It should be a big priority for me to address. For a time, I actually felt myself in a black hole, and if it wasn't for Sandra who kept me afloat, literally, I would have died in my own frustration. She is one, if not the biggest, supporter of Chicana writers.

J.: **In 1989, I took a course called "Chicana Writers" with Professor Norma Alarcón at U.C. Berkeley. I was amazed because it was the first time I read any fiction by Chicana writers and that's how I was introduced to *The Moths and Other Stories*. Do you consider yourself part of a Chicana literary movement?**

H.: Yes, yes I do. I would also include Sandra Cisneros, Cherríe Moraga, Lorna Dee Cervantes and many others still. What this literary body has in common is that we all come from a specific social situation, a working-class background. We have a social consciousness of the sixties, the Chicano Movement, the Black Movement and the impact that those radical days had on us. We are connected with a concrete historical past.

J.: **In what direction do you see Chicana/Latina writers going?**

H.: We are doing some very, very wonderful work. We are providing a source of new breath in literature. We are giving life to people who have never been in literature before. That was one of the things that the editor had told me. She said, "I had never seen characters just like this. Never." Look at the voice of *The House on Mango Street*. Look at the Don Quijote kind of novel that Ana Castillo wrote. You know

what I mean? We are not just writing stories. It is like we are redefining what literature is to us in many ways. One of the reasons I think we writers have to write essays is that we need to translate our own work. Give it the historical context by which the product was produced. It's all so very new. There is still discussion whether *The House on Mango Street* is a novel, a collection of vignettes, or short stories. There is still that type of problematics with the texts we have created. We have the women creating the works and right behind them you have the literary critics, by and large Chicanas, who are trying to contextualize it. I think the critics complement the writers. They give a bigger understanding to show people the importance of this work. It is not only stories. This is something more, a lot more to the movement.

In terms of historical and literary importance, there is a great need for this. That's where I see it. I think we are doing very exciting work. Now the bigger publishing houses are beginning to open up to us but that means little. We still need the control of our own presses to guarantee that our work will be published, popular or not, profitable or not. And time. We will have more time, space and compensation to work on the stories that keep us alive and well.

Juanita Heredia
Silvia Pellarolo

University of California, Los Angeles

Criticism in the Borderlands Interview with Héctor Calderón[1]

Introduction

I

Héctor Calderón's and José David Saldívar's *Criticism in the Borderlands* reterritorializes criticism by inscribing its social intersections and its overlapping categories of literature, culture and ideology, and by framing intellectual production within a geopolitical space filled with vivid historical memory and contemporary social realities.[2] To date, the book has been widely received as bringing new dimensions to the discourses on borders, diasporas and postmodernism. It has been acclaimed as a "virtually monumental collection [that] constitutes a decisive intervention into Chicano criticism reminiscent of classic feminist and African-American anthologies," and as a "new standard for Chicano literary scholarship... poised to play a major role in American letters in the late twentieth century." Finally, it has been credited with altering received notions of "what counts as culture and theory and who counts as theorists."[3] Not surprisingly, little has been said about the dedication that relays a critical intention of enormous significance for those whose encounter with it is assumed as a way out of the historical neglect of Chicana/o and Mexicana/o cultures. The dedication reads: "For all who came before us." This dedication ushers up a generational effect, the possibility of a transnational migration toward other Chicana/o subjects and cultural productions that have been absent from American literary histories. In addition, the book offers the opportunity for another type of mapping, one that links present with past efforts, today's critics with those of yesterday. Thus, a historical consciousness forms an important backdrop for *Criticism in the Borderlands* especially insofar as the anthology incorporates noteworthy critical movements generated within Chicana/o criticism: its ideological breadth and theoretical parameters; its global travel between first and third worlds; and its passage from commentary to metacommentary.

As many have pointed out in book reviews and citations from Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, and the U.S., *Criticism in the Borderlands* offers an important

moment within the development of a critical practice that has survived and flourished "through the persistence of committed women and men."[4] The names of many of the contributors to the volume are now familiar to those working in Chicana/o literature. A few of these critics even figure within general literary and cultural studies. However, much needs to be done if the critical affiliations conjured up at the imaginary level in the dedication are to be fully realized. General and specialized histories of criticism still show little or no inclination for mapping the roads taken and not taken in Chicana/o criticism. The collective efforts that gave birth to the cultural movements within Chicana/o criticism are, thus, not part of the historical record, leaving students of culture with the idea that no one came before us (at least, no one that matters). This makes it difficult to see how the debates associated with the theories of widely disseminated critics such as Gloria Anzaldúa, for example, are part of extensive cultural conversations that can only be entered by going beyond the borders of the criticism of "the mainland" toward an alternative field of criticism. I am referring to criticism that includes the trajectories of individual critics as they refashion their critical identities, that records their conversations with other critics, that seriously examines all those real processes involved in the consolidation of a field of study.

II

At a time when students of Chicana/o literature, culture and ideology have at their disposal a wide variety of epistemological and theoretical frameworks with which to engage cultural productions and are, indeed, contributing to these frameworks in new and exciting ways, it is important to reevaluate the nature of the practice that has given rise to Chicana/o criticism itself, not only in terms of the analysis of critical perspectives, but also in terms of the nature of the activity and the individual histories that it encompasses.

My interview with Héctor Calderón emerged as a result of an interest in this field sparked years earlier by the fact that, unlike many other students of Chicano literature, I studied with Chicana/o mentors and commentators of Chicana/o literature. I had the opportunity to see Chicana/o criticism being produced as a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego. There a critical dialogue was in full swing with the likes of critics such as Rosaura Sánchez, Joseph Sommers, Jorge Huerta, Marta Sánchez, Carlos Blanco, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, Juan Rodríguez, Jaime Concha, and a strong nucleus of graduate students.[5] Together professors and students brought contemporary theories of culture to bear upon Chicana/o literature; thus, Chicana/o criticism was not only something that was being formulated there at the Literature Department at UCSD and its affiliates, it was something that was being transformed on the page, in the late seventies and early eighties.

Through this exposure I gained an interest in understanding how critics of literature arrived at their critical positions. At the same time in my work, I began to

see the value of offering a different kind of representation of critics, one that incorporated their voices, their self-reflexive dialogue, their own metacommentaries, their memories of their trajectories, their exchanges with those who came before them and those who followed.

If the annals of criticism were not registering the impact of another critical history, if Chicana/o criticism had only embraced the field as theoretical approaches, then I had to talk to the critics themselves, a practice that was still quite a novelty as this format was generally reserved for their literary counterparts who were often associated with highly privileged forms of writing. The idea of doing criticism, a history of criticism, through interviews raised some eyebrows even though this format facilitated the recovery of a discourse that had been marginalized and muted. From another angle, however, recovering Chicana/o criticism this way was entirely appropriate because the idea of "dialogue" was vital to criticism. As Todorov explains, "criticism is dialogue...the encounter of two voices..." involving multiple authorship, contrasting works and a historical trajectory.[6] Conscious of the limitations of Chicana/o versions of "*cómo se comenta un texto literario*," I wanted to reconstruct the practice of criticism in a way that shunned the notion of the scholar critic as an exclusive textual persona, as a commodity, or as the sole promoter of literary standards and assumptions. I was interested in refashioning critical identities and critical passages that were vital to the continued dissemination of Chicana/o literature and criticism. I was animated by the lacunae in the history of criticism, by a need to talk back to the histories of criticism that had accepted the idea that criticism had, indeed, undergone a fundamental change in the seventies but could not fathom the idea that another critical sphere was, in effect, operating and doing so under a different chronology and maintaining a strong affiliation with the public sphere.

III

This interview with Héctor Calderón (and the others with critics such as Norma Alarcón, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, María Herrera-Sobek, Luis Leal, Genaro Padilla, José David Saldívar, Ramón Saldívar and Rosaura Sánchez that form part of "Conversations with Chicana/o Critics") bears witness to the striking changes in the history of literary criticism that have yet to be assessed; to the divergent institutional backdrops that frame Chicana/o critical production; and, finally, to the significance of the ethnographic focus for understanding how we entered the academy. It is my hope to leave future students of Chicana/o literature with an idea of *some* of those who came before. The ethnographic passages through life histories of critics (outside of the institution of criticism) are absolutely crucial for understanding the complex social dimensions of Chicana/o criticism and the conditions of its production. It was suggested to me that I edit out these passages from this history, that I represent Chicana/o intellectuals as just that, intellectuals. I rejected this idea because these lived experiences form an essential part of this criticism in the

borderlands: they offer a passageway out of the notion of criticism as a self-contained unit and deepen our understanding of the relations between criticism and society.

The interview with Calderón was itself historically marked by an important event. The interview took place within a week of the conference, Chicano Literary Criticism in a Social Context, that was jointly coordinated by Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar and formed the basis for *Criticism in the Borderlands*. The atmosphere was charged with electric anticipation and dutiful purpose: soon, representative scholars, critics, and writers with diverse critical and institutional affiliations would be descending upon Stanford University for an exchange that promised to mark new directions in Chicano literary theory and criticism. Among the most visible participants would be novelists, Rolando Hinojosa-Smith and Arturo Islas, and poet, Lorna Dee Cervantes. Many longstanding and new members of the Chicano critical community would be in attendance.[7] Already the "generational" effect was beginning to manifest itself in Chicana/o critical discourse, particularly through self-reflexive debates surrounding past and present conceptual frontiers of Chicano literary and critical genres.

Anticipation of the conference weighed heavily upon the interview participants (myself, José David Saldívar and my student assistant Angélica Coronado) who approached the ensuing critical dialogue armed with the general consensus that Chicana/o critical discourse had, indeed, crossed an important watershed in the eighties, boldly entering into a new phase of its existence: an age of Chicana/o criticism that had not yet received proper definition. No longer would Chicana/o critical discourse be subordinated to the existential fact of any given literary text, no longer would critics bear the unjust burden of an anti-theoretical impulse. Just as Chicana/o literature had been recovered, just as it had grown, Chicana/o criticism would flourish, and it would be part of the historical record. Recognition of these changing dimensions of Chicano critical discourse influenced the course of the dialogue, continually obliging both interviewer and interviewee to go back and retrace the course of the trajectory of Chicana/o critical discourse from the personal, autobiographical narrative as a Chicano and as a critic, to his various experiences and formation at diverse literary institutions, to the collective experiences and works of other critics of Chicano literature, and, finally, to the various schools, polemics and points of contact between dissimilar critical traditions and their respective literatures.

At the center of this collage of critical passages, domains, and forces, emerges a vivid and forceful portrait of a Chicano critic, Héctor Calderón, at work as he labors with the disparities of competing Spanish, Latin American, Anglo-American and Chicano literary traditions and conventions, offering the reader a glimpse into the intersecting literary horizons that are currently shaping the dimensions of Chicana/o criticism in the late eighties and early nineties. The cultural and literary dimensions of Calderón's enterprise were visually represented by a sixteenth-century Arabic map of the world displayed in his office (where our interview took

place) that inverted the relations between north and south, between first and third world nations. The walls of his office were lined with the narratives of García Márquez, Islas, Cervantes, Cisneros, Hinojosa, Donoso, and the critical discourses of Jameson, Sommers, Iser, Sánchez, Monegal, Saldívar, and Frye, to cite a few.

The fruits of Calderón's own production include not only *Criticism in the Borderlands*, but also a book on modern and postmodern narrative, *Conciencia y lenguaje en el "Quijote" y "El obsceno pájaro de la noche* " (Editorial Pliegos, 1987), praised in a recent review, "Critical Approaches to Latin American Fiction" in *Latin American Research Review* (29.1 [1994]). His work on Chicano literature includes the following diverse publications: an often cited work on genre with the first readings of Chicano romance and satire, "To Read Chicano Narrative: Commentary and Metacommentary," *Mester* (1983); a brief article in a collection of remarkable essays by highly-regarded critics on Rolando Hinojosa that stood out, according to the editors, for its originality and sophistication, "On the Uses of Chronicle, Biography, and Sketch in Hinojosa's *Generaciones y semblanzas*," *The Rolando Hinojosa Reader* (1985); a lengthy essay that set a new standard for lucid, precise, nuanced readings of Chicano literature, "Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. A Chicano Romance of the Southwest," *Crítica* (1986); an insightful overview of and introduction to the many and varied accomplishments of Chicano literature and criticism, "At the Crossroads of History, on the Borders of Change: Chicano Literary Studies Past, Present, and Future," *Left Politics and the Literary Profession* (1990); an essay in postmodern criticism combining empirical, creative and critical discourses, "Reinventing the Border: From the Southwest Genre to Chicano Cultural Studies," *Rearticulations: The Practice of Chicano Cultural Studies* (forthcoming); and now for *Mester*, Calderón engages the reader in a critical dialogue. Calderón will continue his work on Chicano narrative in his current book project entitled, "Contemporary Chicano Narrative: A Tradition and Its Forms," which is well under way. His work as editor and scholar has been acknowledged and cited in the United States and abroad by numerous critics in the fields of American Literature, American Studies, Anthropology, Chicano Studies, Cultural Studies, Comparative Literature and Latin American Literature. Some of these critics include, Houston A. Baker, Jr., Ruth Behar, Hanny Berkelmans, Jay Clayton, Rosa Fernández-Levin, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Fredric Jameson, Abdul JanMohamed, George Lang, José Limón, Antonio Márquez, Renato Rosaldo, José David Saldívar, Ramón Saldívar, Chuck Tatum, Horst Tonn and Marc Zimmerman.

Originally from Calexico and the son of Mexican immigrants, Héctor Calderón is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UCLA. Here, we chronicle his trajectory, beginning with his place of origin.

Interview

IV

Angie: **I'd like to begin by asking you about your personal history, where you're from, your early education and so on.**

Héctor: Where I was born? ¿Lo quieres en español o en inglés? (*Do you want it in Spanish or English ?*)

A: **En inglés está bien** (*English is fine*).

H: I was born in Calexico, California. My parents both came from Mexico, so I'm the first generation born here in the United States.

A: **What year did they come?**

H: Soon after the Mexican Revolution. My father, Bernabé Calderón, is from Guaymas, Sonora and my mother, Luz Valle, is from Torreón, Coahuila. My father arrived at the age of nine in 1919 with his grandmother, a sister and two cousins; my mother came in 1924 at the age of five with her mother through the hard work and good fortune of her eldest brother. On my mother's side, her family earned a living mainly as migrant farm workers, but during her generation they managed to settle down. On my father's side they were railroad workers on both sides of the border, working for the *Inter-California* in Mexicali or the Southern Pacific in Calexico. In fact, I'm the first Calderón male not to work on the railroad. My parents have known each other since childhood.

A: **And where did they settle?**

H: In Calexico. I lived there, I went to elementary school and high school there.

A: **What kinds of schools did you attend?**

H: I attended public schools except for kinder at Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy.

A: **What was your experience in the educational system?**

H: Well, that was before the Chicano Movement, so you can imagine. The town is right on the border, about 95% Mexican American. From my house you could walk to Mexicali, which is what the town is called on the Mexican side. I tend to think of both sides as one city, as one economic entity. Up until 1924, with the establishment of the Border Patrol, the two sides weren't really divided. Families lived on both

sides. Now the fence is a constant reminder of separation. Calexico is a very Mexican town. In terms of the educational system, which in the 1950s was controlled by the Anglo minority, well, what can I say? It was a segregated school system.

A: **Were your classes predominantly Chicano?**

H: There was one class that was almost completely Anglo composed of children of merchants and farmers and all the rest of the classrooms were almost completely Mexican. We also had a few Asian and African American students as well as Mexican students from Mexicali's upper class. Most of the students in my classroom, rumored to be one of the toughest and lowest academically, were the children of migrant farm workers who lived in the oldest Mexican neighborhood, *La Garra* (The Rag). *La Garra* was a shanty town with unpaved streets across the tracks from the main part of town. From the first grade, in 1951, the class was kept pretty much intact through the eighth grade. Out of some thirty plus students, three of us graduated from high school on time, a few others had to repeat grades and the rest were lost along the way.

A: **Was Spanish spoken at all in the classroom?**

H: All of the children spoke Spanish, but it was frowned upon: you were sometimes punished for speaking Spanish. I guess it's not an uncommon experience.

A: **At home did you speak English or Spanish?**

H: Spanish. It was our first language.

A: **What was your parents' educational background?**

H: They both have a seventh grade education. I do recall that when I was five my father took me to get my first library card. That was very significant in my life.

A: **What about the other members of your family—did they go on to high school?**

H: Yes. I have six sisters, and they all finished high school. There's a fifteen year separation between the eldest and the youngest, so you can get the pattern of transition from Mexican American to Chicano. My older sisters were raised more Mexican, very traditionally, because of the influence of our maternal grandmother Amada Valle who lived with us until her death. Then with me (in terms of ages, I'm in the middle) and the sixties, there's a shift to maybe another way—really a Chicano perspective.

A: **At what point did you become interested in going to college? What motivated you to go on?**

H: I never thought about college until my junior or senior year in high school. In those days, there weren't really counselors for Chicanos: that was something that you did on your own. But two years before I graduated, a group from our high school had gone on to the UC system, and they'd done so well that as a group they received an award for the highest GPA's from a single high school. So that started something: after that, there was a small stream of students that would go on to the UC system. Out of my graduating class in 1963, a group of five Chicanos from Calexico went on to UCLA.

A: **Did your sisters attend college?**

H: The younger ones did, immediately after high school. My older sisters did not until later. Five of them have attended at least two years in a junior college or university. The youngest graduated in Spanish from UCLA and is an elementary school teacher in bilingual classrooms in El Monte, California.

A: **When did you become interested in literature? Was it in high school? Did you or other members of your family read much literature?**

H: No, in high school I was more interested in the sciences. I was in the college prep science track—science and math.
My interest in literature came about not so much through the printed word as through storytelling. I was very close to my grandmother, we all were. My parents had no advanced education; however, they were to a certain degree literate. But we had a grandmother who told us stories every night. This was before our family had a television set, and that might have had something to do with the closeness of our family group.

A: **What kinds of stories did your grandmother tell you?**

H: We were told all kinds. Stories of her childhood in Mexico. She was born Amada Triana in 1888 in Sombrerete, Zacatecas. I recall a story about an evil *cacique don Natividad del Toro*, others about Indian raids and the Revolution. She also told me traditional stories that later I found could be traced to other sources in Spain such as the romance of Genoveva de Brabante which I later rediscovered in Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (*The Lost Steps*). Then there were the stories that she made up, imaginary ones, children's stories, many versions of *la llorona* (the wailing woman). All of it from Hispanic and Native American traditions, but oral...

A: **And the purpose was to entertain...?**

H: It was entertainment, yes, and instruction, values. I couldn't go to sleep without having a story told..

A: **And what was your relationship to Anglo American literature? Were you exposed to anything conventional outside of school?**

H: No, just in school.

A: **How did you finally come to study literature?**

H: When I went to college and started reading more widely I became involved with literature. But it wasn't a serious enterprise until I read Latin American literature. About five years before that, in 1965, I was in the Work Study Program working for Wayland D. Hand, Director of the Center for Folklore and Mythology at UCLA, when I happened to run across the works of J. Frank Dobie and a book by an author with a Spanish surname—Paredes. The title was, of course, *"With His Pistol in His Hand."* I started reading it and couldn't put it down. I read it straight through even though I was at work. I became interested in folklore, took a course from Professor Hand, and even collected stories, proverbs and folk cures from my family for him. Those were the sixties and I was very much affected by the oral tradition including Black folk and blues music and rock 'n roll. Although I was an undergraduate, I worked as a bibliographer alongside graduate students some of whom were quite famous in their own right: John Fahey, a folk performer; Pete Weldon, a blues record producer; and a crazy fellow named Barry who introduced me to the blues and who went on to fame in late night radio and MTV as Dr. Demento. Working in Folklore and Mythology for three years, reading Américo Paredes, coming from an oral storytelling tradition within my family, searching for alternative forms of artistic expression all came together for me in Latin American literature especially in the work of Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez and José Donoso.

A: **Did you have contact with any Chicano professors?**

H: No. There were no Chicano professors at UCLA at that time. While I was there at UCLA I think there were only seventy or eighty Mexican Americans. About eleven were from my hometown so we had a little group that hung out together. But no, no Chicano professors that I recall.

A: **When did you initiate your studies in Spanish and Latin American literature?**

H: I initiated them later...after teaching seventh and eighth grade in El Monte, I

decided I wanted to be a teacher, and I went back to get what I thought would be a secondary credential in Spanish. But one thing led to another and before I knew it I was in the B.A. program in Spanish at Cal State LA. And then from there I went into the M.A. program at Irvine.

A: **At Cal State LA, did you take any courses in Chicano literature?**

H: No. I studied Spanish and Latin American literature. You had to have a balance between those two, but I never had a course in Chicano literature. Never.

A: **When did you begin teaching Chicano literature?**

H: Not really until Yale, in 1983. Although I did teach some Chicano literature in my Chicano culture course at Stanford in 1981.

A: **What about Irvine? Did you have any kind of professional relationship with people involved in Chicano Studies? Chicano literature?**

H: No, we didn't have a Chicano instructor there until the year I left, when Alejandro Morales came. We graduate students were not encouraged to study Chicano literature. A course like that would have to be an independent study, and the units would not count toward your degree.

A: **How did the Chicano Movement influence your literary sensibility?**

H: I was at UCLA when it began; 1965 was an important year with the strike in Delano. Reies López Tijerina from New Mexico came to speak (all in Spanish) to UCLA students. I remember in 1968 a small group of us from United Mexican American Students (U.M.A.S.) met with the Chancellor in his office, requesting Chicano courses, Chicano professors... these events made an impression, politically speaking.

A: **Do you remember the first Chicano novel or poem that you read? What was it? What was its impact on you?**

H: When I was a graduate student in 1972 in the M.A. program at UC Irvine a professor of mine, Seymour Menton, had written a review that appeared in *Latin American Literary Review* of *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* by Tomás Rivera. Seymour told me that Tomás Rivera had been a student of his in Guadalajara, México during one of those summer National Defense Institutes in the 60s. So he gave me the review and said, in his unique voice, "Here, Héctor, read this—it's Chicano literature." So I did, I read it, and of course I was immediately involved with Chicano literature. Right after that Alurista's *Floricanto en Aztlán* came out and then in '72

Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima,* which won the Quinto Sol Prize. So that's more or less when I began to read Chicano literature.
Later, in the fall of 1974 the chair of the Spanish Department at Irvine, Juan Villegas, wanted to see the department involved in an activity that would have an impact on the Chicano and Latino community of Southern California. So I was one of the founders of the Chicano Literary Prize; several of us graduate students together with Villegas and Alejandro Morales put that contest together in 1974-1975, organized the whole thing. And that's when I began to be very much involved with Chicano literature. I'm very proud of having a hand in the oldest continuous prize in Chicano letters.
I recall that I asked Seymour Menton if he could get Tomás Rivera to come and speak at the award ceremonies for the prize, since they were friends and Seymour had written that review. Rivera came to Irvine in 1975, and I met him as well as Ron Arias who had won first place in short story... and that was the beginning of my professional contact with Chicano professors and writers.

A: **What was your educational experience like as a graduate student? Could you trace your evolution as a reader and critic during those years?**

H: My first interest was in Latin American literature. The book that fired my imagination and started me on that track was García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) and then Juan Rulfo and all the writers of the "Boom." In the early stages, about 1971, it was just an interest in reading the literature, without any critical activity attached to it.
I developed an interest in literary theory while working with Professor Andrés Díez Alonso, a Spaniard, at Irvine. He was a Marxist and as intelligent and knowledgeable as any of the famous critics I have met. He was an outstanding teacher and my role model. He would give us students everything he had in his library to read. Under his guidance, it was a smooth transition to having a critical approach. Later on, I tried to apply the same disciplined rigor to Chicano literature.

A: **When and where did you earn your doctorate?**

H: When and where ... and under what circumstances? I attended Yale from fall 1975 to fall 1977 having completed all courses with Honors, language requirements and written and oral qualifying exams by May of 1977. When my wife, Vicki, and I had our first daughter in November 1976, I stayed home with her, Catherine, from the time she was five weeks until December 1977; Vicki worked full time for a bank in downtown New Haven. After the department accepted my disseration prospectus in December 1977, we returned to California. After Yale, I just couldn't get a teaching position though I tried. I was a substitute teacher for the East Area of the LA Unified School District and taught courses at night at Cal State, LA while I worked on the thesis. I finished the thesis in the fall of 1980 as I was starting my first

teaching position at Stanford having been offered a lecturership by Jean Franco. The doctorate with a Major in Contemporary Latin American Literature and a Minor in Comparative Literature was awarded in May of 1981.

A: **What was it like going from Irvine to Yale?**

H: It was a pretty big change. I mean if you can imagine never having studied literature at all and going to Cal State LA, and everything goes well, and then to Irvine, and again, things go well, and you seem to be on this track you never thought of, never dreamed of ... And then you get accepted into the Spanish department at Yale.
Getting accepted there was very important to me. I wanted to study with Emir Rodríguez Monegal, who was at the time one of the most important critics of Latin American literature. I applied to only one place and that was Yale.
I arrived there with quite a bit of idealism about the place. Being there was a little different than what I'd expected, but there were positive aspects... I had a friend from high school, Conrado Aragón, now a Superior Court Judge in East LA ... he'd come to Yale the year before I arrived, and he set me up with another fellow to help smooth the transition. And the other fellow was Ramón Saldívar. It turned out we even lived in the same building. We were neighbors in a Latin American student *barrio* that also included Ernesto Zedillo from Mexicali. Ramón was a graduate student in Comparative Literature in his last year working with G. Hillis Miller and Paul de Man. Ramón and I hit it off, and at the time, in terms of making that transition, that was very important. I also met José David Saldívar who was a junior at Yale College.

A: **Describe your relationship with Monegal. How did he influence your work?**

H: His was a very powerful influence until his death in 1985. Both friends and enemies would agree that he was a powerful presence. He was my professor for only one graduate course, a seminar on Borges in 1975 in which José Saldívar, as an undergraduate was a fellow classmate. For the thesis we agreed that I would work independently and when necessary seek his advice. After our initial meetings, we met only twice while he was in California at USC. In 1983 when I returned to Yale as a faculty member, he took me under his wing. We were good friends although we had different political opinions. He never steered me in any one direction and was willing to help me. Much was written about Monegal's politics in the early seventies; that is part of the history of the "Boom." Although he had his idiosyncrasies, he didn't force his views on his students. By the way, not many know that his daughter was imprisoned in Uruguay for her activities with the *Tupamaros* . We met in his hospital room a week prior to his death from cancer; he expressed his extreme pleasure with the way my career was developing. As you well know, a history of Latin American literature cannot be written without mention of his name. I am pleased to have had a similar relationship with Roberto González Echevarría, my

former Chair at Yale, who I consider the highest ranking critic in Latin American literary criticism.
Monegal was a promoter of literature and approached it as an avid but careful reader and wrote in a style that was part criticism and part journalism. He came from an earlier school of critics having studied on a scholarship with F. K. Leavis in England; he then pursued his literary interests through journalism. He was able to reach a wide audience with that balanced style which it seems many critics lack. I am still not completely able to do that myself, but I'd like to—to write for a wide audience and at the same time maintain a critical edge. He also taught me the importance of one's work. He had such a strength of will and continued reading and writing (his memoirs) until the very end.

A: **What was your course of study at Yale?**

H: I went there to study Latin American literature, particularly the contemporary period, because I saw a relationship between my own intellectual growth, the 1960s, the Chicano Movement, and a parallel development in Latin America. There was a growing consciousness of one continent with interests that transcended national boundaries, and I think the same sort of consciousness was part of the Chicano Movement.

A: **What was the topic of your dissertation?**

H: It was on the theory of the novel, using an historical approach. I did a comparative study, Cervantes's *Don Quijote* and José Donoso's *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*. But before I explain about that, you have to understand what it was like when I came to Yale... The tremendous excitement... It was the period from 1975 to 1977, and the Yale critics were not yet the "Yale critics," everything was in the formative stages, a very exciting time to be in literature. One of the first weeks I was there, Ramón said, "Derrida is coming." I said, "Who's Derrida?" Well, pretty soon I found out who Derrida was.
About my third or fourth week at Yale, I am walking into an auditorium to hear Derrida speak, and having people point out Geoffrey Hartman and Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller. And the atmosphere was sort of: *Here was the word*. The final answer was about to be given, and all these critics were gathered to hear it.
And that poststructuralist way of thinking was very influential for me. At the same time, I'd always had a historical perspective, there was that element too... Because of the historical bent of so much of Latin American literature, especially writers of the "Boom" such as García Márquez or Fuentes, we're almost obligated to approach it with an historical perspective. With Anglo American literature, we don't do that. I was trying in the dissertation, "Self and Language in the Novel," to bring historical depth to poststructuralism. As you can tell by the title it was very much a "Yale" thesis in the light of the work of Paul De Man and Derrida. It seemed to me, for my

own formation, that I needed some historical reconstruction of the representation of the subject through language. What Derrida was calling the metaphysics of presence, the union of Greek conceptuality and Christian creationism, I found all there in the intellectual sources for Cervantes's *Don Quijote*. So I took two important moments in the development of narrative in Spanish, the beginning of the modern with Cervantes's *Don Quijote* (1605, 1615) and the postmodern with José Donoso's *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* (1970). I was taking two slices out of history *à la* Foucault to find out something about the ideological preconditions for the epistemologies at work in each book. For both psychological narratives, once consciousness comes under scrutiny there follow similar concerns with the representation of the subject through language.

I located Cervantes's concerns with the psychological subject as the locus of signification in the psychological, aesthetic, and linguistic discourses of the sixteenth century, in Juan Huarte and Alonso López Pinciano. The concerns with the *ingenio natural* (natural genius) and the *ánima racional* (rational soul), with what the self can know and understand through representational language, in large measure, determine Cervantes's concepts of the writer and reader as well as character. I was trying to document with Spanish sources what Foucault had written about modernity and the *Quijote* in *Les mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*). This rationalist epistemology in *Quijote* leads eventually to Fielding's experimentation with exemplary narrative.

The influence of Henry James on José Donoso served as a superstructural mediation connecting an earlier nineteenth-century psychological realism in the works of Balzac and Flaubert with the search for representing hidden states of consciousness through parable and allegory. These strategies, so much like Freudian psychoanalysis, were to mark, as R. P. Blackmur had written earlier, James's turn toward literary modernism. This historical layering is evident in Donoso's deconstruction of the patriarchal subject. Although, I must explain, that Donoso added his own narrrative discourses from Native American tales and myths to mass media images, newspapers, romantic novels and Disney comics. This fabulation and storytelling were indicative of a Latin American postmodernism. Chicano writers like Tomás Rivera and Rolando Hinojosa have used similar techniques (the layering of orality, realism and modernism), although in a less baroque fashion, to produce a collective subjectivity.

I was trying to pull all that together, and it was somewhat naive, to think I could do it. But to me it seemed important to relate these two periods, the Renaissance and what was being called postmodernism...showing connections between the Spanish Renaissance and the handling of these forms—the novel, romance, satire, chronicle and what was happening in the 1960s with the Latin American "Boom." Critics were doing this in other literatures, and I wanted to do it with Spanish and Spanish American literature. It was an ambitious project, and not totally successful. But in terms of my formation as a critic to understand modernity and postmodernism, it was very important.

A: Your experience has been that of a Chicano coming from a bilingual, working-class background, growing up on the border and living in the United States as an ethnic minority. What impact might that background have had on your formation as a critic?

H: Well, just coming from a background that was largely oral was bound to have an impact...Then going to Yale where *writing* is everything, the written text everything. It seemed to me that the approach was skewed toward Europe and a large part of the world—a lot of literature and storytelling—was being left out. The heavy emphasis on the written word means that you're basing your whole ontology, thinking of Derrida, on something that's limited mainly to a single continent, and leaves out the majority of the people in the world. Those early memories of my grandmother telling me stories have had a tremendous influence upon the way I think about literature.
Another thing that bothered me about Yale, offended me, even, was this notion that history does not exist. That even the subject doesn't exist. Again, that seemed to exclude a whole group of people who were very much involved with history, who were making history at that moment. The Chicano Movement itself, for example, was not only making history but it was a new collective subject. And there didn't seem to be a space for thinking about that within the framework that says: "there's no subject, there's no history."

José Saldívar: If I could interject just something? Héctor and I were saying recently that it seems a bit ironic—just when all these critics are talking about "the end of the subject," and we have Chicanos, feminists, and other people of color finally beginning to see themselves *as subjects*, as capable of action instead of just being acted upon... It may not be a coincidence that mainstream critics are talking about the end of the subject just when those people who have been cut off from power become aware of their potential role—as subjects—within the historical moment.

H: Walking around New Haven you would hear people spouting these things, you know, there's no history, there's no subject. But of course there is. You know that there is, and I know that there is!

A: **I think that what you're saying right now closely relates to a series of important matters that arise from the interaction of two dissimilar traditions of literary criticism. I am referring to the kinds of political, cultural issues, and the problems raised by looking at a text from the periphery of the mainstream critical culture... Obviously the questions raised by alternative partially incorporated perspectives are bound to have an impact—they're going to interject not only new types of cultural discourse, but new questions, new ways of looking at literary texts. As you said earlier, often there is a gap between what**

happens in mainstream criticism and what happens in Latin American and Chicano criticism. I'm curious as to how it was for you, working in the Spanish department at Yale and attempting to incorporate all these elements—how did you find these theoretical trends, such as deconstruction, being reckoned with in the Spanish department?

H: I had some problems, you know, with fellow classmates at Yale and well-known critics who would take every wave of new criticism that came out of France and swallow it whole and then apply it to Latin American literature. Those French critics, including the Belgian Paul de Man, had their own historical development—they had worked their way through the philosophy of language, phenomenology, existentialism. All of that had come in stages, and here, it was taken whole and complete and applied to produce a poststructuralist reading of the latest book out of Latin America, like critic Alicia Borinsky did, for example ... Derrida in Europe was much more tentative and policitically subversive given his place within Western philosophy. Yet here, in the United States, the way he was read, was very orthodox and conservative. It seemed to me there was a problem with that. Roberto González Echevarría who began his career as a disciple of Derrida and deconstruction began to see its limitations and his work on the Latin American chronicle and novel was an important shift toward reading literature as a social institution embedded with the history of both Spain and America.

And going back for a moment to my dissertation, I thought that if I was going to truly understand poststructuralism, I needed to trace it back through the various steps that Western thought had gone through to reach this point, this particular poststructuralist or postmodernist moment. As things stood, these theories weren't being sufficiently reckoned with; they were being lifted whole from the French tradition, whatever the current fashion.

A: **As a graduate student at Yale, with a solid grounding in critical theory, can you tell me what was your communication with other critics of Chicano literature? Did you see any relationship between what you were experiencing within the mainstream critical tradition and what you saw going on within Chicano and Latin American criticism?**

H: At that point, I have to say I knew very little about a "Chicano" critical tradition. I had read a little bit about people like Roberto Cantú, and Alejandro Morales who was at Irvine the last year I was there, and Luis Leal, who was also a writer I was familiar with at the time. Then when I arrived at Yale, Juan Bruce-Novoa was there, it was his second year on the faculty there. So my knowledge was fairly limited as to what was being done in Chicano literature.

Even so, and partly I suppose because of my own background, I felt uncomfortable about some of the things Roberto Cantú was saying, to the effect that Chicano writers were responding to some chaos that could not be described, could not be

defined. Chaos, and then all of a sudden, Chicano literature! At UCI, I heard him give a talk on Oscar Zeta Acosta's responding to chaos in East LA and it seemed to me that something essential was being avoided...that there needed to be work done to describe just what that "chaos" was.
And of course it was Juan Bruce-Novoa who made the most of the notion of chaos. His work on the subject had a religious bent to it. Drawing on Bataille and Juan García Ponce, he saw the Chicano artist existing outside of society and politics, a romantic figure who made art out of nothing, who transformed chaos into form. Juan's "space of Chicano literature" was limited, sacred and inviolable. I had a problem with that type of early Chicano criticism as well.

A: **Did you study with Juan Bruce-Novoa?**

H: I never took a course with him, but he was (and continues to be) a very good friend, very supportive, as well as the first person I met when I came to the Spanish department.

A: **Can you comment on the reception of someone like Bruce-Novoa at Yale?**

H: It was very positive; the students liked him a lot, and he had quite a following. Although Ramón Saldívar as a graduate student taught the first Chicano literature course in the Spanish department at Yale, we should credit Juan, I think, with establishing from the beginning of his tenure a real Chicano presence at Yale, and this included working with another professor in history, Pedro Castillo. In fact I remember being somewhat envious of the undergraduates, because there were so many more of them (they had a hundred plus students, we only had seven or eight Chicano graduate students at the time scattered over the entire campus) and they in turn seemed such a close group. He did a lot to bring people together, to establish that community... In large measure, he made possible my position at Yale.

A: **When did you begin writing specifically about Chicano literature—what was the first critical project that you embarked on?**

H: At Stanford in 1980-81. I was a lecturer at Stanford; I taught in the bilingual program and also, for the first time, I began to teach Chicano literature and culture. Then the following year I went to UCLA as a Visiting Lecturer in Spanish American Literature, not Chicano Literature. The Spanish department sponsored a *mesa redonda* (round table) with Alurista, Guillermo Hernández and Margarita Nieto as candidates for a position in Chicano literature and I was asked to be the fourth person on the panel. That was my first formal paper in November 1981; it was called "Literatura chicana como comunicación" ("Chicano Literature as Communication"). In that paper I applied Wolfgang Iser's theories of reading to *Y no se lo tragó la tierra*.

A: **What was the main point you were trying to make about Chicano literature as a form of communication? Were you taking from Jakobson's model?**

H: Well, I was attracted to the work of Wolfgang Iser and Fredric Jameson who had been my professors at The School of Criticism & Theory in 1978. They both offered me a more historical appproach to literature different from the desconstructive fashion of the time. I had began to explore their theories in my graduate papers at Yale. Jameson offered me an ideological/historical approach to literature... Iser raised the question of how ideology is transferred from a transindividual system to the text, how the text incorporates an ideology, which is then reactualized by the individual reader. And in that sense, this whole idea of reading itself being an act of performance and interaction becomes important.
That first piece on Chicano literature, and a lot of the work I've done through the mid-eighties, was attempting to blend the ideas of these two writers, Iser and Jameson, and apply them to a text, in this case, *Y no se lo tragó la tierra*. And what came out of that was the idea that Rivera was striving for the same kind of communal relationship with his audience that storytellers traditionally enjoy: the same face-to-face dialogue and directness, the same intimacy of communication but doing it in a print culture, and that could only be accomplished by asking the reader to participate—to engage in some kind of performance of the book. And through this reading-performing process, as the protagonist arrived at consciousness of himself and his world, the Chicana and Chicano reader would also. And if that were the sort of experience Rivera was aiming for in this exemplary narrative, then the fragmentation of the plot made sense, because it served the purpose of encouraging the reader's active participation: the reader reconstructed the plots along with the protagonist of the story and produced an ideology of a Chicano community, a constant theme in Rivera's essays. Of course, the strategies are more complicated than my description for one should take into account the layering of historical moments as Rivera takes the reader from residual, to dominant or hegemonic, to emergent utopian ideologies. In the end, the singular or individual subjectivity of the Chicano artist is at the service of the community.

A: **One of your first published essays on Chicano literature was called "To Read Chicano Narrative: Commentary and Metacommentary." I wonder if you might talk a little more about how Fredric Jameson influenced you in this piece since the title of your essay is so reminiscent of his earlier work, "Commentary and Metacommentary."**

H: Jameson's writings have been very influential in my work. Actually, our interests have taken us along similar paths. He may be the only one of the world-ranking critics who reads Chicano literature. He has taught Chicanas and Chicanos in his courses. As I already mentioned, I took a course from him at the The School of

Criticism and Theory at Irvine in summer 1978 after finishing my course of study at Yale. As you well know, a group of Chicano critics including Rosaura Sánchez, José Limón, Lauro Flores, Ramón and José Saldívar are constructing a discourse informed by and also critical of Jameson. I have shared my work with him and consider him a strong supporter of Chicano literature. Had it not been for Jameson, *Criticism in the Borderlands* (1991) might not have been published. In 1987 I sent the prospectus for this collection to every major university press in the United States including my home press at Yale. I was turned down by all except Duke University Press. The Director Dick Rowston, who had grown up in central California, gave the prospectus to Jameson. Jameson encouraged the press to continue with the project for inclusion in his "Post-Contemporary Interventions" series. The collection was published in spring 1991; the first printing had sold out by late 1993.
I am so pleased that he saw the value in this critical anthology.
While I was struggling with *realismo mágico* (magic realism) in my graduate papers at Yale in 1975-76, his article "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre" in *New Literary History* allowed me to refocus my writing in terms of the representation of the subject. After completing my dissertation in 1980 and reading *The Political Unconscious*, I discovered that we both had reached similar conclusions on the different social worlds that give rise to romance and novel and on the importance of the concept of the psychological subject for the development of realistic narrative. And the combination of oral tales, myth, curse and satire that occupied my writing in the final chapter of the dissertation and for which I had no term is now being referred to as Third World postmodernism or "the return to storytelling." Later in *Critical Inquiry*, Jameson himself through his friendship with the Cuban critic Roberto Fernández Retamar wrote an article on magic realism in film. Thus narrative as determined either by First World or Third World realities has led me to return to the writings of Jameson.
In the article on commentary and metacommentary also on chicano romance and satire, I was drawing on genre criticism in the work of Jameson and also Northrop Frye. I had been encouraged to continue my work on narrative and these critics by my professors at Yale, Peter Brooks and Alfred MacAdam. Jameson and Frye offered an alternative to the novel-centered interpretation of Chicano narrative. When one thinks of the many forms of oral and written narrative throughout world cultures, one has to realize how culture-specific, how European, is our notion of Chicano narrative.
Frye gave me the European context. Jameson's idea that genres are dependent on a specific moment for their origin, their invention, and that they die or re-surface according to changing social conditions was also very attractive. And Iser was also very useful with his notion that the text belongs to the reader, it is the reader who actualizes the text. And Jameson would agree that there is a performative aspect to the text which is already ideologically overdetermined that the reader must realize. I was moving from Western culture, to a historical perspective, to the private moment of reading. I think we all have to agree that there is that moment to be taken

into account. We can discuss the issues of audience or public, but we read in private. The act of interpretation, in these three areas, needed to be scrutinized for Chicano narrative.

In Chicano literary theory, critics were using the word "novel" and it occurred to me that we couldn't do that without examining the notion of genre. The way you use that word "novel" should mean something, should have a specific meaning to critics, whereas it seemed to me we were using the word simply as a label, a catch-all phrase.

Of course some of it has to do with marketing. Publishers need labels for their products; distributors have to know what shelf to put a book on; and anything longer than say a hundred pages, if it's a narrative, is called a novel. But for critics, it was a case of using the word a little too loosely, and not looking at what I'd call the specific narrative strategies used by writers. And it's not enough to supply a list of technical devices, either. Sure, you can list all of the technical elements which make a novel, which make a romance, but to investigate the way a writer might be using these elements as political strategies, as interpretations of history, as revealing social contradictions... And I guess there, again, Jameson's work is significant. I was applying some of his work on the "political unconscious" to genre not just as an aspect of technique, but as a strategy with ideological and political implications.

A: **I think that by obliging us to go back and rethink these accepted categories, you're opening up a very interesting territory. It brings to mind the essay you wrote on Rudy Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima*, in which you take the position that this text is a romance, not a novel. I would have to agree with you that this term "novel" has been thrown around rather loosely, that it hasn't been defined as precisely as it could be, that it's a problematic term... And especially when applied to Chicano literature, which by its nature seems to resist these classifications. In a sense, our entire critical apparatus has arisen in response to a fixed idea of what constitutes a novel, and this may be a primary stumbling block. There are people who claim we have no Chicano novels, that their fragmented form more closely approaches that of the literary sketch, or other early narrative forms.**

H: It is a very difficult issue, and it's a problem of applying the notion of genre to Chicano literature, which is, after all, a very specific literature. It's not "Western" literature in the conventional sense, yet it has grown both from within the tradition of Western literature, and in response to pressures from the periphery of Western culture. If you think in terms of where we're educated, the universities we attend, the institutional framework which transmits a European, in some cases a very British tradition, and then you examine the cultural bonds with Mexican or Latin American tradition—this dual formation, First World and Third World, is going to come through in the work of our writers. A Chicano writer has a certain social formation that may run counter to the "Western" tradition at the same time that he

or she has an ideological formation that *is* Western. It's there, we can't deny either aspect... We're brought up in this country, we're trained in this country...
What I'm trying to grapple with is the question, what to do with writers who are somehow different from the mainstream tradition of Western culture or Western aesthetics... To ask myself how they are using these traditional Western forms, how are they changing or modifying them to produce something different? No writer simply repeats tradition; it's going to be changed to fit the needs of the particular writer. When I read Chicano narrative, I'm very much aware of these two aspects, that yes, I'm reading Rolando Hinojosa, I'm reading Sandra Cisneros, and they may be coming from a very Chicano perspective, but at the same time they're very much influenced by the institutions of the United States.

A: I think we can see the same thing happening on a more global level, between developed and underdeveloped nations. You have certain literary forms that have arisen in a context of advanced capitalism, that is to say, in the U.S. and Europe, and then you see some first world forms being reproduced in dependent countries, Latin American, for example. But the form will never be an exact replication of the original mold—it will be modified by the cultural and social circumstances of the writer who uses it, and who transforms it.
It seems to me that the same process must be at work in the critical response of this literature. You are part of an alternative circle of critics who have been shaped by the mainstream critical tradition and who, at the same time, are responding to the tradition, modifying it in terms of your own perspective as a Chicano, as someone emerging from a specific set of social and cultural circumstances.
I think we need to ask what happens when we take a critical apparatus that has developed from within a particular cultural context and apply that apparatus to a text that has emerged from a somewhat different cultural and historical perspective. To what degree does the text itself shape or contribute to shaping its critical response, the critical perspective adopted, under the impact of the cultural circumstances implicated within the text? These questions have been raised elsewhere, and while there are no definite answers now, they will be important in the consideration of our critical history.

H: I would agree with that, there are no easy answers. Let me begin in a very simplistic fashion. Much of our early normative criticism, and here I'm most familiar with narrative, did not allow for any deviation in form even though this was due to different cultural or historical perspectives. I'm thinking of negative criticism leveled against writers because their works did not conform to the strategies of the novel or literary realism. The novel was invoked because of its central place as an indication of advanced cultural development. Critics who claim that there are no Chicano novels do not concern me. In this context, books by Tomás Rivera, Rolando Hinojosa, Sandra Cisneros and Oscar Zeta Acosta are exemplary

of these problems of interpretation. Fragmentation and digression need not be negative characteristics.

I'm also the first to admit that critics bring their own ideological baggage to their role as readers. However, I have tried to write criticism from the particular ideologies (aesthetics) operative within the text. I have also begun to reassess the usefulness of the political unconscious to all Chicano narratives. *Bless Me, Ultima* in which the social and historical contradictions of gender, class and race are driven underground is a text that lends itself to a psychoanalytic interpretive model. This view does not do justice to *Y no se lo tragó la tierra* which for me is a critical examination of what we might term a Third World Mexican-mestizo peasant culture during a period of increasing exploitation and agricultural production in southern Texas.

What really troubles me, however, is that this literature will be appropriated by non-Chicano or mainstream critics who will publish in widely circulating journals without any references to the critical debates within Chicano criticism and without any interest in the political dimensions of Chicano literature. This is now happening in some well-known journals. In the end, is it a matter of a critical apparatus or the interests being served? The career of Guillermo Gómez-Peña is a good example. He is someone from Mexico City who moves to Tijuana and appropriates from Chicano and northern Mexican culture the critical vocabulary on borders without any real attention to the analysis of history, race and class. His performance art dwells on spectacle and stereotypes that are easily consumed by the Anglo-American media. He receives the MacArthur Foundation Prize from the United States and leaves Tijuana for New York City. So much for the border!

A: **Returning then to your essay on *Bless Me Ultima*, published in *Crítica*... In this piece you also discuss the relationship between literary form and ideology. You refer to this novel as "a Chicano romance of the Southwest," and suggest that the form in which Anaya chose to write it—the romance—is actually a response to certain social and historical conditions depicted in the text. I wonder if you could elaborate on this concept?**

H: Yes. But let me begin by stating that this article on Anaya was an intervention in a debate over the appropriateness of the concept of Latin American magic realism for *Bless Me, Ultima*. It seemed to me that this concept, which has had its own problematic existence within Latin American criticism, had been lifted too easily from its own critical context and forced upon this Chicano literary text. It was more useful to situate Anaya's full symbolic landscapes and scenic registers, even the denial of the forces of history, within an older Romanticism and an Anglo-American or British modernist literary tradition. For example, the confrontation between subject and object, really the contemplation and absorption of the subject by the forces of an animistic nature in *Bless Me, Ultima* occur in a radically different context in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. While there are moments of epiphany in

García Márquez, he is such an intelligent writer that he did not resort to the older subjectivism of Romanticism. Is there an artist-hero, a man of sympathy and feeling like Antonio Juan Márez y Luna in Macondo or Comala for that matter? I'm not denying that links exist between Chicano and Latin American literature especially in the use of myth; however, we must draw distinctions.

My article also lacked any real grounding in the literature of New Mexico and the West, but now I am pleased that Genaro Padilla's work on early autobiographical texts by New Mexican Hispanas has uncovered a romance tradition imported by Easterners, Anglos, and superimposed upon native New Mexican traditions. Following on the work of Padilla, I have traced this discourse to European romanticism exported in mid-nineteenth century to New England and then superimposed by easterner Charles F. Lummis on conquered Mexican territory in the 1890s. As Lummis boasted in 1925, he was the first to identify Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and parts of California, Colorado and Utah as the Southwest or more specifically the Spanish Southwest. A whole set of literary, folkloric and cultural practices were invented in the early twentieth century which survive to this day in the popular imagination and which are marked by the priority of the Spanish element over Native American and Mexican/Chicano traditions.

Now to answer your question, Anaya specifically located his narrative in the summer of 1945 when New Mexico was undergoing extreme social and economic changes. The war and the accompanying industries and new large scale farming had displaced many young males from traditional life styles in New Mexican villages. Sociologist Charles P. Loomis has documented this period of population loss. Of course, the detonation of the first atomic bomb at Point Trinity twenty-five miles from Carrizozo, New Mexico, was also to have its consequences within the area. Anaya was aware of these events because he refers to them as having a tragic influence on the Márez family. However, his interpretation is cloaked in myth, in the romance of Spanish settlement and Native American traditions. It's just as signs proclaim upon entering New Mexico, "Welcome to the Land of Enchantment."

Anaya constructs a mythical landscape where events are governed by cyclical patterns, magic, curse and prophecy. The outcome of these strategies is the polarization of good and evil. The real causes of events are largely ignored and no imaginative analysis of the contradictions of gender, race and class is undertaken. In this relationship between history and myth, this romance bears no resemblance to Latin American magic realism.

Also, in romance, as opposed to the novel form, we see a contrasting view of history. In the novel, events appear to rise out of the complex and often ambiguous acts of individuals, whereas in romance, the emphasis shifts: history, at least the writer like Rudolfo Anaya wants to see history, is a rather simplified contest between good and evil forces. There is no ambiguity either: the hero is always solidly on the side of the good forces. That seemed to be the view of historical development found in *Bless Me, Ultima*. From the very beginning, there's no doubt about "character"... the symbolism of Antonio Márez y Luna is clear from the beginning, and everything is

more or less prefigured. Here, my own work, *Conciencia y lenguaje en la novela* (*Self and Language in the Novel*), on the representation of the psychological subject as it emerges along with individualism and literary realism, has been helpful in drawing distinctions between the novel and other narrative forms such as romance and *realismo mágico* (magic realism) in which "characters" or actants are fluid and not restrained by the conventions of realism.

A: **I think what you're saying here, about the ideological preconditions necessary for this particular literary form is very important, particularly insofar as it contributes to the ongoing debate on Chicano narrative. But it seems to me that you could take it a lot further, that maybe this form is delimited and determined by a social ideology, and in this case, one we've come to call "cultural nationalism." In other words, I'm suggesting that ideology does not just emanate from the use of certain *textual* forms... And I'm a little bothered by the fact that, in not taking your discussion beyond what you've defined as the ideology of form, you more or less downplay Anaya's tendency, in that work, to mythologize the past, to mysticize it even. This kind of harking back to some glorious precolonial past that you find echoed in his book—those attitudes had their place within the context of the Chicano Movement, but in the present time, it seems maybe overly fatalistic—not really in touch with the realities of social change as we currently perceive them.**
Wouldn't you agree that from a historical-materialist or "Marxist" perspective, anyway, it's important to go beyond the ideology of form, beyond the preconditions in a text, beyond formulaic manifestations, to evaluate the types of social ideologies that are permeating our literature...perhaps even paving the way for the adoption of certain forms over others, or at least creating a symbolic field for the expression of various types of ideological formations be they authorial, collective, or formal?

H: Yes, you're right, the symbolism of Antonio Márez y Luna is very much related to a conservative strain of cultural nationalism, taking the history of New Mexico and making it into some sort of mythic construct. All turns out to be a celebration of the past. This is the romantic view of history that Genaro Padilla has traced back to an Anglo ideological hegemony in New Mexico. But obviously at the moment when that book came out, there was a strong movement toward myth and mystification—that part of the Chicano Movement that was caught up with books like Castañeda's *The Teachings of Don Juan*. I tend to think of Anaya as consciously transforming his own well-known New Mexican tradition—Charles F. Lummis, upper-class Hispanas like Cleofas Martínez Jaramillo, and Hispanist Aurelio M. Espinosa—into a Chicano tradition with similar tendencies. After *Bless Me, Ultima* Anaya writes *Heart of Aztlan* using a term popularized during the height of Chicano cultural nationalism, a term, by the way, that was used much earlier by Anglos in New Mexico.

At the 1987 NACS meeting in Salt Lake City, I heard some interesting papers on Octavio Romano and his concept of a cultural core, values that persist over time. The books that received the Quinto Sol award were selected for specific reasons. There is much work to de done in this area also.

A: **Returning again to the question of genres in Chicano Literature, a topic which is interesting indeed! Now we all know that the novel is a bourgeois form, and that obviously, Chicanos, as a people, have had very little access to this form, or to the social strata in which it's produced. Would you agree that some of the problems involved in the classification of Chicano literary forms can be traced to the social, economic, and cultural circumstances of our writers, and the impact which these circumstances have exerted on their literary creation?**

H: Yes, of course. The social circumstances are such that the majority of writers and critics—and I can speak from my own personal experience—most of our writers come from working-class backgrounds. And yet their training has come from within the institutions of the United States. We come from a certain class, but we participate in the activities, we pursue the interests of another class, and it becomes a question of where your allegiance will be, with which class. As you suggest, it's a situation of working-class writers grappling with a bourgeois form...I think these questions of self-identity weren't really problems for Chicanos until recently, when this contradiction between our working-class origins and our experiences as critics, teachers and writers came about and began to influence the literature and criticism. That's partly what makes it Chicano literature, our being forced to invent forms that are very much our own.
And one aspect of form that is our own is the oral one; I believe that Chicano writers of narrative tend to employ certain oral storytelling techniques. We're trying to convey to the reader the sense that it's not just the individual we're concerned about, it's the community. In some sense the narrative is viewed as a community event—it emerges from and speaks to the community in much the same way that storytelling does.

A: **In recent years, Chicano criticism has experienced an unprecedented growth and sophistication, and it has expanded to include a new and dynamic circle of critics. Which critics have most influenced you in terms of your approach to Chicano literature, and your theoretical formation as a critic?**

H: Joseph Sommers, for one—there's absolutely no doubt about that.

A: **What in particular caught your attention about his approach?**

H: His seemed the most significant historical-materialist approach to Chicano literature, at the time when I first encountered his work.

And Ramón Saldívar... I think the importance of Ramón is the rigor that he brings to a text. I'm probably more of a practical reader of a text than Ramón. Also, he has a way of using English that I don't see with any other critic of Chicano literature, or anyone else, for that matter. Others have made this point about Ramón—that he brings a new sense of the use of language, as well as a definite critical rigor to Chicano literary criticism. There are many others from whom I have drawn examples. I already mentioned Genaro Padilla. Over the years, Rosaura Sánchez has been producing great, thorough scholarship. Norma Alarcón writes honest, probing feminist scholarship. I admire José Limón's anecdotal style. José Saldívar is quite adventurous with his criticism. And of course, Américo Paredes still amazes me for his creative and critical work which now spans almost the entire twentieth century. He has had a remarkable career!

A: **How would you evaluate the initial popular criticism that was coming out in the beginning, ten or fifteen years ago? How would you react now, in hindsight, to all those literary manifestos?**

H: I have to say that at all times, I try to contextualize or historicize what I read. This is in no way saying that the "popular" criticism was not good. Given the moment it was written, it was important. You have to begin somewhere, and we owe a great deal to all those critics who first began writing on Chicano literature. There's no way out of that.
It just seems that now we're at another point in history, and we are bringing new critical tools to bear upon our reading of the literary text. Though I will admit that I've had my reservations about certain critics who were writing say in the early and mid-seventies.

A: **Would you care to express those reservations?**

H: Well, for example, the historicist criticism of Luis Leal and Raymund Paredes, the kind which, in my opinion, wants to see the history of Chicano literature as an unbroken evolutionary line that descends from the Spanish chronicles of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. This, of course, is a problem of literary history, but one which we will be dealing with for some time to come, especially now with the accelerated development of both Chicano literature and criticism. The Spanish chroniclers are Spaniards of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, something happens with the introduction of the Anglo element. Recently, I have listened to some very interesting papers by Rosaura Sánchez, Lauro Flores and Genaro Padilla that have dealt with specific nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts written by Mexican Americans. Until this work is done, I agree with José Armas that we can't speak of a Chicano tradition that extends centuries into the past. I do not want to give you the impression that history is not important for me. In my own work I want to work out on a theoretical level the still evident determinations,

the mental and economic structures that were set in place with the discovery and conquest of the Americas. Awareness of these determinations was certainly part of a new Chicano subjectivity in the sixties. And a writer as smart as Richard Rodriguez is aware of this although he tries to deny it. His feelings of inferiority about his ethnicity and culture are proof that he has bought into a racist ideology. The battles waged by Europeans and "Americans" against their cultural others have been repeated often and are all too familiar to Chicanos. Why search for origins, when the past is already present with us. Of course, my observations pertain to a literate tradition. The persistence of a *mestizo* culture is another matter which will go unquestioned.

In all fairness to Leal and Paredes, in the seventies, at that point, it seemed you had to do that, you had to verify, "Yes, we do have a tradition. It's Spanish, Mexican and English, and it is a tradition." I have written about this with reference to the relationship between Chicano and Mexican literature, in a review of Luis Leal's work *Aztlán y México: Perfiles literarios e históricos*. Given the circumstances, without a readily available context for Chicano literature, the logical direction to look toward for some starting point was Mexico. Writers and critics pursued this course. Fine, you have Vasconcelos, Paz and Fuentes. That was fine and good because we didn't have much else in terms of a context for Chicano literature. But it bears repeating that Chicanos are not Mexicans even though some Mexican intellectuals are beginning to reclaim us. Now I think we've reached a wider perspective, we're asking "What's *American* literature? What does it include? This is the point where José David Saldívar comes into the debate, where his influence on my own work becomes very important. His whole rereading of American literature in terms of two hemispheres, borders and diasporas, that interact with each other proposes that we should not look at American literature as the national literature of a certain group that has appropriated the right to speak for everyone; rather we have to see it as much larger and more culturally diverse. That's the contribution of José's *The Dialectics of Our America* has made to my thinking about Chicano literature, seeing it in terms of its place within the literatures of the Americas.

A: **How do you feel about the professionalization of Chicano criticism... the potentially negative effects of this process in terms of its narrowing of the audience that our criticism reaches? At one time, it was easy for someone in sociology or political science to pick up a review of a Chicano text and get something out of it, without knowing a whole lot about even literature, let alone various modes of philosophical thought. But now we are moving towards a more specialized critical vocabulary. We are speaking in a difficult terminology that isn't very accessible even to other Chicano intellectuals. Which means it's even further removed from the general public.**

H: Yes. But I'm also wondering just how large was that original public... We were

talking a moment ago about popular critics. Were they "popular" in the sense that they reached a large audience? I guess I have my doubts as to how much Chicano literary criticism, popular or otherwise, has reached the average Chicano reader, if there even is such a thing as the average Chicano reader. I also have the feeling that our literary criticism is largely ignored by Chicanos in other disciplines.

A: **So you don't foresee any possible negative effects in this increasing tendency toward specialization in our literary criticism?**

H: Let's just say that at this point in my career I'm trying to look at the beginning of Chicano narrative and examine its existence from the late nineteenth century to the present. It's a limited project, but for me, it's an important one. I try in my own work to deal with the material in a way that's both theoretically informed yet accessible to a wide readership. But I know that it's only partially accessible to the majority of Mexican Americans in the United States. I hope, however, to reach a wider group within the academy. I do think it's important to reach non-Chicano readers; in fact, I think we should be reaching as many audiences as possible, and if that means translating into Spanish and other languages, fine. No need to limit oneself. José Saldívar and I tried to reach a wide an audience as possible with *Criticism in the Borderlands*. From the reviews and citations that we have received of this collection, it has added to the critical debates on borders, diasporas, postmodernism, etc., in the fields of Latin American Studies, American Literature, Comparative Literature and Anthropology in the United States, Europe and Canada. You know in some quarters Chicano writers are seen as representatives of the community while critics are professionals far removed from "the people." Of course, this is a false problem because, on one hand, most writers have academic degrees and, on the other, the Chicano readership exists mainly within the academy. Should we think of Chicano literature as a closed circuit involving only writers and critics? I don't think so. As professors, we have an immediate constituency; students are also readers. I take my pedagogical duties very seriously and try to inform my students of the active roles that they should be playing both within their institutions of higher learning and after graduation as professionals within their communities.

Professionalization for both writers and critics is bound to happen, specialization is going to happen. In fact, it is already happening... In a way it's good in the sense that there will be more critics who will be writing on Chicano literature and culture with even greater rigor and more solid theoretical grounding. I have met so many critics and writers who are doing such interesting work. Think of the important work being done by you, Rosaura Sánchez, José and Ramón Saldívar, Genaro Padilla, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, Norma Alarcón, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa not to mention the Mexican and European scholars. This specialization will lead us, as you have stated elsewhere, Angie, toward an age of Chicano literary criticism.

Hopefully, as a result of this collective process and the debates it generates our work

will be taken seriously by our colleagues, including Chicanas and Chicanos in other disciplines, and, ultimately, the interests of our community will be served.

Angie Chabram Dernersesian
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NOTES

[1]Some of the ideas put forth in the introduction are elaborated in this as yet unpublished manuscript entitled "Conversations with Chicana/o Critics. "Héctor Calderón's interview was first conducted in May 1987 while he was at the Stanford Humanities Center on leave from Yale University; the interview has been revised and updated for this issue of *Mester.*

[2]*Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology.* Ed. Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

[3]See book description and comments on jacket by Fredric Jameson, Houston A. Baker, Jr., Charles Tatum, Juan Bruce Novoa and Hanny Berkelmans. The book forms part of the Post-Contemporary Interventions Series edited by Stanley Fish and Fredric Jameson.

[4]Calderón and Saldívar paraphrasing Rolando Hinojosa in his Foreword to the anthology.

[5]Graduate students included Alurista, Alda Blanco, Rafael Chabrán, Mónica Espinosa, Lauro Flores, Rosa Linda Fregoso, Luz Garzón, Yolanda Guerrero, Pedro Gutiérrez, Sylvia Lizárraga, Clara Lomas, Lupe López, Mariana Marín, Rubén Medina, José Monleón, Beatriz Pita, Rita Sánchez, Gina Valdés and Cecilia Ubilla.

[6]Tzvetan Todorov. "A Dialogical Criticism." *Raritan* 4.1 (1984):64-75.

[7]Those scholars in attendance included Norma Alarcón, Juan Bruce Novoa, Norma Cantú, Lauro Flores, María Herrera-Sobek, Francisco Jiménez, Luis Leal, José Limón, Ellen McCraken, Teresa McKenna, Elizabeth Ordóñez, Genaro Padilla, Alvina Quintana, Juan Rodríguez, Renato Rosaldo, Ramón Saldívar, Rosaura Sánchez and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto as well as members of the wider Stanford scholarly community.

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Bilingüismo y préstamo léxico: español chicano vs. español mexicano*

Introducción

El análisis de la forma en que los hablantes de una lengua adoptan las palabras de otra ha planteado dos problemas que surgen sobre todo en el ámbito del estudio del léxico de los bilingües por medio de cintas magnetófonicas:

a. Separar los préstamos léxicos de los ejemplos de alternancia de lenguas intraoracional (*code-mixing* o *codeswitching*).[1]
b. Reunir información completa sobre los diferentes campos semánticos que conforman el léxico de una lengua.

A fin de precisar hasta qué punto estos problemas están relacionados con los métodos de colección de materiales, en este trabajo sugiero una alternativa metodológica al uso de cintas grabadas. Propongo recoger los materiales léxicos por medio del uso de un cuestionario léxico, complementado con preguntas de aceptabilidad. Aquí pongo a prueba esta alternativa metodológica en el análisis de la introducción de préstamos del inglés en el léxico de hablantes bilingües de inglés-español y monolingües hispanohablantes.

En la primera parte de esta investigación trato de los préstamos y la alternancia de códigos; en la segunda me refiero a la colección de datos de los distintos campos semánticos de una lengua; en la tercera presento la metodología empleada en este trabajo; de la cuarta a la séptima analizo los préstamos momentáneos, los permanentes y las traducciones literales entre chicanos y mexicanos; en la octava hago un resumen y doy las conclusiones.

1. Los préstamos momentáneos y la alternancia de lenguas

Cuando una palabra de una lengua se halla incorporada sintácticamente en una oración de otra lengua, puede clasificarse como un caso de préstamo momentáneo o como un ejemplo de alternancia intraoracional de lenguas. Los préstamos momentáneos se introducen irregularmente y no es preciso que estén integrados ni morfológica ni fonéticamente, aunque pueden estarlo. A veces se incorporan al vocabulario original y se vuelven préstamos permanentes[2]. La alternancia de lenguas es el uso de dos lenguas en el discurso de hablantes bilingües. Hay varios tipos de alternancia de lenguas. La alternancia intraoracional de lenguas es uno de

ellos. Ocurre con elementos oracionales, tales como frases o palabras.

A continuación ilustro con ejemplos de lengua hablada algunos casos difíciles de clasificar. Las muestras proceden de cintas de habla espontánea, grabadas a informantes bilingües proficientes cultos de Los Angeles. Todos han asistido a la universidad y entienden, leen, hablan y escriben el inglés y el español.

"Hay muchos *condominiums* en *Palm Springs*, en *Florida*, que son *c o n d o s* pero tienen un, una *nurse in the first floor*"; "Ahí van y hacen *barbecues* los domingos"; "No sé cómo, pero me fui al *lodge*"; "*New York* tiene un *stigma*".

En las muestras no resulta claro si las palabras en cursiva son préstamos momentáneos o casos de alternancia de lenguas, dado que los hablantes utilizan ambas estrategias en el discurso, y la definición de uno y otra no los distingue. Algunos de los ejemplos de la muestra resultan particularmente complejos de clasificar. Las voces *condominium*, *condos* y *stigma* tienen los equivalentes del español *condominio* y *estigma*. Estos vocablos significan lo mismo en el inglés y en el español. Además, en el inglés son préstamos del latín. El antillanismo *barbecue*, es préstamo en ambas lenguas, pero tiene diferente significado en una y otra. Determinar el tipo de interferencia de una lengua sobre la otra resulta sumamente intrincado en estos casos.

Una forma más segura de evitar todos estos problemas es encontrar un contexto en el cual los hablantes eviten la alternancia de lenguas. De esta manera, cuando seleccionen el español, las palabras del inglés que utilicen se podrán catalogar como préstamos y viceversa.

2. Los campos semánticos de una lengua

En 1970 Mackey advirtió que el análisis del léxico en cintas magnetofónicas de lengua espontánea no permite recopilar toda la información de los distintos campos semánticos que constituyen el léxico de una lengua. Ello se debe a que resulta imposible predecir la selección léxica de los hablantes. Por ello, la única forma de obtener datos completos de los campos semánticos es preguntando cuestiones de léxico a los informantes de la lengua o dialecto objeto de estudio. La colección de palabras aisladas resulta metodológicamente adecuada, pues los hablantes adquieren cada vocablo junto con sus propiedades de selección semántica y sintáctica. Es decir, cuando un hablante aprende la palabra *condominio* sabe su significado y el contexto gramatical en el que puede incorporarla.

3. Metodología empleada en este trabajo

En apartados anteriores se mostraron los problemas que plantea el estudio del léxico en entrevistas libres. Por ello, en este trabajo he optado por estudiar los préstamos del inglés al español de Los Angeles utilizando una metodología distinta. Dado que hay contextos en los que los hablantes bilingües inhiben la alternancia de lenguas, en esta investigación se ha utilizado uno de estos contextos para recoger información léxica. De esta manera excluyo la yuxtaposición de lenguas. El uso de un cuestionario en español, cuyas entradas se preguntaron también en español,

motivó que los 25 hablantes bilingües entrevistados prescindieran de la alternancia de lenguas. Por lo tanto, las palabras inglesas seleccionadas por ellos pueden considerarse exclusivamente ejemplos de interferencia del inglés al español. Las respuestas obtenidas en las encuestas de los bilingües se compararon con respuestas equivalentes dadas por 25 hablantes monolingües mexicanos, publicadas en *El léxico del habla culta de México.*

Los préstamos del inglés no registrados en los diccionarios se preguntaron a veinte informantes, diez chicanos y diez mexicanos, en un cuestionario adicional.

3.1 El cuestionario y las preguntas

El cuestionario consta de 764 preguntas. Abarca los campos semánticos del cuerpo humano (330 preguntas) y del vestido (434 preguntas). Este cuestionario forma parte de otro más amplio, el *Cuestionario para el estudio coordinado de la norma lingüística culta de Iberoamérica y de la Península Ibérica* (1973), elaborado por los miembros de la subcomisión ejecutiva del PILEI, el cual contiene de 4,452 preguntas divididas por campos semánticos.

A fin de mostrar el tipo de cuestionario usado, en el cuadro 1 incluyo un ejemplo de cuatro preguntas elegidas al azar, dos de cada campo, con las respuestas de los informantes monolingües y bilingües:

EL CUERPO HUMANO

	Bilingües	*Monolingües*
1. EL ESQUELETO	esqueleto (22)	esqueleto (25) 1-25
	esqueletón (1)	
	calaca (1)	
	osamenta (1)	
5. EL MAXILAR SUPERIOR	mandíbula superior (11)	maxilar superior(23) 1-6,7-16,18, 20,21-25
	maxilar superior (6)	mandíbula superior(1) 19
	quijada (6)	quijada (1) 17
	bocado (1)	
	mandíbula saliente (1)	

EL VESTIDO

	Bilingües	*Monolingües*
637. EL TRAJE	traje (24)	traje (25)
	conjunto (1)	
882. ALIANZA (anillo de boda)	anillo de matrimonio (1)	argolla (11)
	anillo matrimonial (3)	anillo de boda(s) (9)
	alianza (3)	anillo de matrimonio (3)
	anillo de boda (2)	argolla de matrimonio (2)
	anillo (1)	alianza (2)
	sortija (1)	anillo matrimonial (1)
		anillo de casado (1)
		sortija (1)
		aro (1)
		fe (1)

Cuadro 1.Ejemplo de preguntas y respuestas del cuestionario

En el cuadro 1 la palabra *esqueletón* se encuentra en cursiva debido a que es un caso de interferencia del inglés. El número entre paréntesis indica el número de veces que los informantes seleccionaron una palabra. El número a la izquierda de las palabras en mayúscula corresponde al número de la entrada del cuestionario. Dichas palabras indican el objeto que se preguntó. Las palabras en minúscula son las respuestas dadas por los informantes. En las respuestas a la pregunta 882 hay más de 25 ocurrencias debido a que varios informantes dieron más de una variante. A cada informante se le asignó un número, el cual aparece debajo de las respuestas a las preguntas 1 y 5 de los monolingües. Omito el número correspondiente a cada informante en las demás preguntas de la muestra por razones de espacio.

Las pesquisas se realizaron por medio de dibujos o mostrando el objeto

directamente y preguntando al informante"¿Qué es esto?". Los dibujos representaban objetos tales como *ojos*, *camisa*, *pulsera*, *etc.* Cuando no fue posible mostrar o dibujar el referente, éste se decribió, usando las definiciones del diccionario de la Real Academia Española. Por ejemplo, "*privación o disminución de la facultad de oír*" para la pregunta *sordera*. Las preguntas no incluyen categorías fucionales, tales como artículos, preposiciones o conjunciones. Todas son categorías léxicas: nombres, verbos y adjetivos.

3.2 Los informantes

Los informantes bilingües chicanos y los monolingües mexicanos entrevistados han asistido a la universidad y algunos de ellos tienen conocimientos pasivos de francés o de alemán. Todos tienen intereses tales como el arte, el teatro, la lectura etc. Doce son mujeres y trece son hombres. La edad de los informantes fluctúa entre 25 y 81 años.

Los hablantes bilingües nacieron en Los Angeles o llegaron a dicha ciudad muy jóvenes, antes de la pubertad. Todos son bilingües nativos proficientes (entienden, hablan, leen y escriben ambas lenguas) y se criaron en hogares en que se hablaba el español. Viven en Los Angeles, salvo viajes cortos al extranjero. Fueron entrevistados por 25 encuestadores.

Los hablantes monolingües son todos mexicanos de nacimiento y han vivido en la ciudad de México siempre, salvo viajes cortos al extranjero. Algunos de ellos tienen conocimientos pasivos de inglés, francés o alemán. Fueron entrevistados por diez encuestadores.

3.3 El cuestionario adicional

Los préstamos del inglés proporcionados por informantes bilingües que no se hallan registrados en los diccionarios se preguntaron a veinte informantes más, según se indicó arriba. Los informantes y los encuestadores tienen las mismas características de los del cuestionario léxico. Sin embargo, las preguntas fueron de selección múltiple. Por ejemplo, *clavical*: "la usa siempre, la usa poco, no la usa pero la conoce, no la usa nunca".

3.4 Los encuestadores

Los encuestadores que entrevistaron a los informantes monolingües y bilingües son cultos, universitarios, miembros de las comunidades estudiadas. Son nativos de las ciudades en que hicieron las entrevistas. Todos recibieron entrenamiento especial a fin de que las preguntas se hicieran de igual manera. Los encuestadores de los hablantes bilingües son proficientes en inglés y español.

4. Préstamos del inglés al español

Cada uno de los cuestionarios proporcionó cerca de 20,000 respuestas, como puede verse en la columna *número de respuestas* del cuadro 2. Entre bilingües y monolingües, los préstamos del inglés al español son pocos, menos del 3% entre

los bilingües[3] y menos del 2% entre los monolingües, según se indica en la columna 5.

1. BILINGÜES

c. semántico	*# de preguntas*	*# de respuestas*	*#préstamos del inglés*	*%anglicismos*
cuerpo humano	330	8 528	133	1.56
vestido	434	11 414	452	3.96
Total	764	19 942	585	2.93

2. MONOLINGÜES

c. semántico	*# de preguntas*	*# de respuestas*	*#préstamos del inglés*	*%anglicismos*
cuerpo humano	330	8 580	——	——
vestido	434	11 284	328	2.90
Total	764	19 864	328	1.65

Cuadro 2. Préstamos del inglés en el español de Los Angeles y de la ciudad de México

En el cuadro 2, primera columna, se indican los campos semánticos analizados entre bilingües y monolingües. En la segunda columna se señala el número de preguntas que contiene cada campo semántico preguntado. En la tercera columna se anota el número de respuestas dadas a las preguntas del cuestionario. En la cuarta columna se incluye el total de préstamos del inglés que proporcionaron los informantes. Este número es parte del número contenido en la columna *# de repuestas*. En la última columna se indica el porcentaje del total de respuestas que corresponde a los anglicismos del cuestionario.

En el número de los préstamos del inglés (columna 4) se incluyen préstamos momentáneos, préstamos incorporados y traducciones literales. El bajo porcentaje de préstamos es paralelo al encontrado en otras situaciones de bilingüismo (véase Lope Blanch 1990, Poplack 1993). Sin embargo, no puede afirmarse que la interferencia de una lengua a otra se baja universalmente, pues hay situaciones de bilingüismo distintas a la del español y el inglés en Los Angeles en que la

interferencia de una lengua sobre la otra es más profunda (véase por ejemplo Hill y Hill 1986; Parodi 1986 y Parodi y Quicoli en prensa).

5. Distribución de los préstamos del inglés en el léxico

Las respuestas de los dos grupos de hablantes al cuestionario muestra que los bilingües incorporan préstamos del inglés en ambos campos semánticos, pero los monolingües no. Los monolingües sólo seleccionan anglicismos cuando se refieren a objetos que forman parte del campo semántico del vestido. Ello se muestra en el cuadro número 3.

1. BILINGÜES

c. semántico	*# total unidades léxicas*	*#préstamos del inglés*	*%anglicismos*
c. humano	1968	97	4.92
vestido	2634	186	7.06
Total	4602	283	6.14

2. MONOLINGÜES

c. semántico	*# total unidades léxicas*	*#préstamos del inglés*	*%anglicismos*
c. humano	1320	——	——
vestido	17362	57	3.28
Total	3056	57	1.86

Cuadro 3. Distribución de unidades léxicas entre bilingües y monolingües

En el cuadro 3, columna 1, se indican los campos semánticos analizados. En la columna 2 se incluye el número de unidades léxicas dadas por los informantes a las preguntas. En la columna 3 se indica el número de unidades léxicas del inglés proporcionadas por los informantes. En la última columna se indica el porcentaje de unidades léxicas procedentes del inglés con respecto del total de unidades léxicas. En el cuadro 3 puede observarse que los informantes bilingües proporcionaron

283 préstamos del inglés y los monolingües 57. El porcentaje del número de anglicismos del total de unidades léxicas es de 6.14% entre bilingües y el 1.86% entre monolingües.

Tomando en consideración la frecuencia con que un hablante bilingüe alterna las dos lenguas[4], cabría esperar un índice más alto de préstamos. Sin embargo, como se indicó anteriormente y como puede observarse en el cuadro 3, ello no es así. A pesar de que el porcentaje de préstamos del inglés al español de Los Angeles y de la ciudad de México no es alto, hay diferencias interesantes en el español de una y otra ciudad. En el español mexicano las 328 ocurrencias de anglicismos se reducen a 57 unidades léxicas. En el español de Los Angeles las 585 ocurrencias de palabras de origen inglés se restringen a 283 variantes léxicas. Los anglicismos del español mexicano, debido a que son préstamos incorporados, forman parte del vocabulario común. Lo mismo que cualquier otra palabra del español, pueden coexistir con otros vocablos de los cuales son sinónimos o cuasi-sinónimos. Por ejemplo, en el léxico monolingüe la palabra *lipstick* (13%) coexiste con *lápiz de labios* (28%), *lápiz labial* (28%), *bilet* (25%) y *pintura de labios* (6%), lo mismo que la voz *argolla* (33%) covaría con *anillo de bodas* (27%), *alianza* (6%), etc. según se muestra en el cuadro número 1. Ocasionalmente los préstamos del inglés son el único término para referirse a algún objeto, por ejemplo *bikini* (100%), *champoo* (100%) o 1044 *mocasín* (100%). Entre los monolingües, el 58% de préstamos del inglés fueron seleccionados una o dos veces (33 de 57 unidades léxicas). Sólo el 9% de las palabras fueron ocurrieron 24 o 25 veces (5 de 57 unidades léxicas) en las respuesta a las preguntas del cuestionario. Es decir, los préstamos del inglés entre los monolingües se concentran en ciertas áreas de su léxico, pero no de manera exclusiva, pues casi siempre coocurren con otras palabras del español.

Los bilingües emplean las mismas estrategias que los monolingües en la selección de las palabras. Con respecto de los préstamos, hay diferencias numéricas entre uno y otro grupo. Entre los bilingües los préstamos del inglés también suelen ocurrir en baja proporción en las respuestas al cuestionario, pero con un índice de dispersión más alto. Casi todos estos covarían con palabras del español. En el español de Los Angeles cada préstamo del inglés ocurre en una o dos ocasiones el 85% de las veces (243 de 283 unidades léxicas). Por ejemplo, *Adam's apple* (8.69%) coocurre con *laringe* (73.91%) y *manzana* (8.69%) y *las cuff links* (9.52%) coexiste con *mancuernillas* (57.14%), *mancuernas* (9.52%) o *gemelos* (23.80%). Sólo tres palabras, *shampoo*, *mocasines* y *brasier*, fueron seleccionadas 24 o 25 veces (3 de 283). El alto grado de dispersión de los préstamos del inglés, unido a un índice bajo de concentración parece ser característico del bilingüismo en circunstancias similares a las de Los Angeles. En la región de Ottawa-Hull, Poplack, Sankoff y Miller (1988) encuentran una situación parecida a la de Los Angeles con respecto a la concentración y a la dispersión de préstamos del inglés al francés. La introducción de préstamos lingüísticos en situaciones de monolingüismo se debe, en la mayor parte de los casos, a la necesidad de los hablantes de referirse a realidades nuevas. De ahí que no haya anglicismos en el campo semántico del cuerpo humano, pero sí en el del

vestido entre los monolingües. En cambio, en situaciones de bilingüismo, la razón por la cual los hablantes adoptan un préstamo resulta menos clara. Hay, sin embargo, ciertas pautas generales que permiten determinar el motivo por el cual los bilingües seleccionan una palabra procedente de la otra lengua. En el apartado número 7 se verán ejemplos que ilustran dichas pautas generales.

6. Tipo de préstamo entre bilingües y monolingües

Los monolingües mexicanos sólo seleccionan préstamos del inglés incorporados al español mexicano. Los bilingües chicanos, además de este tipo de préstamo, introducen en su discurso préstamos momentáneos, traducciones literales y préstamos peculiares del español chicano, como puede observarse en el cuadro número 4.

CUERPO HUMANO	*bilingües*	%	*monolingües*	%
préstamos establecidos	——	——	——	——
préstamos momentánteos	77	79.4	——	——
préstamos del español chicano	6	6.1	——	——
traducciones literales	14	14.5	——	——
Total	97	100	——	——

VESTIDO	*bilingües*	%	*monolingües*	%
préstamos establecidos	79	42.4	57	100
préstamos momentáneos	74	39.8	——	——
préstamos del español chicano	14	7.6	——	——
traducciones literales	19	10.2	——	——
Total	186	100	57	100

Cuadro 4. Tipo de préstamo usado entre bilingües y monolingües

En el cuadro número 4, columna 1, se indica el tipo de préstamo recogido en el cuestionario, en las columnas 2 y 4 se señala el número de unidades léxicas correspondientes a cada tipo de préstamo entre bilingües y monolingües respectivamente: préstamos establecidos, préstamos momentáneos, préstamos propios del español chicano y traducciones literales. En las columnas 3 y 5 se señala la distribución de los porcentajes de los préstamos. La clasificación de los préstamos se hizo consultando diccionarios tales como el *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua española* de Corominas, el *Dicionario de anglicismos* de Alfaro, el *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, el *Diccionario de mejicanismos* de Santa María y *El diccionario del español chicano* de Galván y Teschner. Sin embargo, como muchos de los anglicismos no están registrados en dichos diccionarios, clasifiqué las palabras recogidas en el cuestionario monolingüe como préstamos establecidos. Ello se debe a que es imposible en principio que un hablante con las características de los informantes del cuestionario mexicano responda a una pregunta sobre el español utilizando un término del inglés, francés o del alemán que no sea préstamo. Además utilicé la frecuencia como guía para establecer qué palabra es préstamo. Asimismo, me serví de la frecuencia para determinar cuando hay desplazamiento de sinónimos y para establecer el término dominante cuando había coocurencia de voces. El empleo de la frecuencia como indicador supone que, una vez determinados los constituyentes de un campo semántico, la frecuencia de uso puede indicar la probabilidad de selección de un término frente a las otras palabras que conforman dicho campo.

Los términos del inglés no registrados ni en los diccionarios mencionados, ni en *El léxico del habla culta* se preguntaron a diez hablantes mexicanos y a diez hablantes chicanos en un cuestionario adicional. Los hablantes entrevistados tienen las mismas carcacterísticas que los hablantes que respondieron al cuestionario léxico (ver 3.2). Si dichos hablantes indicaron que ellos no usarían dichas palabras, se clasificaron como préstamos momentáneos o como traducciones literales, según fuera cada caso. Todos ellos ocurren una sola vez. Algunos ejemplos son *clavical*, 'clavícula', *dimples*, 'hoyuelos', *lapeles* 'solapas', *tramear* 'zurcir', *estilo de pelo*, 'peinado', *rabo de pony*, 'cola de caballo'. Los términos que ignoraron los informantes mexicanos, pero que están registrados en *El diccionario del español chicano* o que resultaron aceptables para los informantes chicanos se clasificaron como peculiares del español chicano. Ejemplos de este tipo de préstamo son: *bib* 'babero', *blush* 'colorete', y *pinki* 'meñique'; véanse más ejemplos y las palabras con las cuales coocurren en el cuadro 7.

Arriba se señaló que la frecuencia con que se selecciona un término puede indicar el deplazamiento de sinónimos o la coocurrencia de un vocablo con otros. El hecho de que una palabra se haya registrado tan sólo una vez no significa necesariamente que dicho vocablo no esté integrado en el léxico. Como ya se indicó, la selección lingüística no se puede predecir. Por ello, resulta sumamente importante hacer una encuesta adicional sobre las voces con un índice de ocurrencia bajo. Pero si una palabra ocurre varias veces es seguro que está integrada.

En el cuadro 6 proporcionó una muestra de los préstamos del inglés integrados al español chicano y al mexicano. Cada una de estas voces se registra diez o más veces en las respuestas al cuestionario. Nótese que sólo el 2.8% de anglicismos (8 de 283 variantes léxicas) se usó más de diez veces entre los chicanos, frente al 23% empleado por los mexicanos en diez o más ocasiones (13 de 57 unidades léxicas). Esta disparidad numérica se debe, como ya se indicó previamente, a la desigualdad entre concentración y dispersión en el español bilingüe y el monolingüe. Sólo menciono la forma coocurrente de porcentaje más frecuente en los cinco ejemplos ya incluidos en el cuadro 6 por razones de espacio.

bilingües					*monolingües*			
anglicismo		*ip*	*covariante*	*ip*	*anglicismo*	*ip*	*covariante*	*ip*
821	bikini	.63	traje debaño de dos piezas	.36	bikini	1	———	
812	brasier	1	———		brasier	.85	sostén	.14
984	tuxedo	1	———		esmoquin	.95	tuxedo	.09
641	overol	.94	buzo	.05	overol	.91	mono	.08
806	zipper	.50	cierre	.50	zipper	.46	cierre	.54

Cuadro 6 préstamos incorporados en el español bilingüe y monolingüe

En el cuadro 6, columna 1, indico el número que corresponde a cada palabra en el cuestionario. Las columnas 2 y 6 contienen las listas de los préstamos del inglés en el español chicano y mexicano respectivamente. Las columnas 4 y 8 incluyen las voces que coocurren con los préstamos con mayor frecuencia. Las columnas 3,5,7 y 9 comprenden los indices de probabilidad de las palabras a la izquierda. El índice de probabilidad se calculó siguiendo los lineamientos de Mackey 1970, según la fórmula ip (v lt > v lv= at/a). Como ya se indicó, el índice de probabilidad señala la posibilidad de ocurrencia de un término con relación a otro con el cual coexiste en un mismo campo semántico.

La coincidencia de voces entre monolingües y bilingües resulta notable con respecto a los préstamos incorporados. Ello puede explicarse debido a la cercanía que hay entre el español de los informantes y el español mexicano. La mayor parte de los informantes o bien llegaron de México de niños o bien son primera o segunda generación en los Estados Unidos. Por otro lado, la cercanía geográfica con México, la inmigración constante y el hecho de que los medios de comunicación masiva

hayan adoptado el español mexicano como estandar en Los Angeles pueden explicar dicha coincidencia. Futuros estudios más detallados sobre el tema podrán aclarar si este punto es general en el español chicano de Los Angeles.

Cabe suponer que en estos casos no ha habido interferencia del inglés en el español de los bilingües. Estos ejemplos parecen ser préstamos originales del dialecto del español adquirido por los bilingües y no innovaciones originadas por el contacto de las dos lenguas. El inglés en coexistencia con el español refuerza el mantenimiento de los anglicismos originales. Pero cuando hay divergencia entre dos anglicismos, uno original y otro procedente del inglés de Los Angeles, predomina la voz cercana al inglés local. Por ejemplo el anglicismo *tuxedo*, ha invertido el índice de frecuencia con su coocurrente *esmoquin* en el español de Los Angeles, dado que la forma *smoking* se desconoce con ese significado en el inglés de Los Angeles. Por otro lado, el contacto de las dos lenguas motiva que los hablantes bilingües reconozcan los préstamos del inglés y los pronuncien utilizando las pautas fonéticas del inglés y no las del español, como los monolingües.

Entre los bilingües es más alto el índice de frecuencia de los anglicismos incorporados al español que los préstamos del inglés privativos del español chicano, como puede observarse en el cuadro número 7. Al igual que los préstamos momentáneos, los préstamos privativos del español chicano sólo ocurren una o dos veces. De ahí que resulte metodológicamente crucial la segunda encuesta en la que los informantes bilingües señalaron las formas que ellos usaban.

En el cuadro número 7, menciono cinco ejemplos de anglicismos peculiares del español chicano, junto con la forma coocurrente más usual y su equivalente en el español mexicano:

bilingües				*monolingües*		
anglicismo		%	*covariante*	%	*covariante*	%
972	bib	.04	babero	.98	babero	.96
1058	laundry	.03	lavandería	.96	lavandería	1
957	mascara	.05	rimel	.94	rimel	1
291	pinki	.16	meñique	.88	meñique	.70
719	t-shirt	.03	camiseta	.96	camiseta	1

Cuadro 7 anglicismos peculiares del español chicano

En el cuadro 7, columna 1, indico el número correspondiente a la entrada del

cuestionario. La columna 2 contiene la lista de los préstamos del inglés en el español chicano. Las columnas 4 y 6 incluyen las voces que coocurren con los préstamos con mayor frecuencia en el español chicano y el español mexicano. Las columnas 3,5 y 7 comprenden los indices de probabilidad de las palabras a la izquierda.

Ninguno de estos ejemplos fue aceptado por los informantes mexicanos consultados por segunda vez. En cambio, los informantes chicanos los aprobaron e indicaron que los usan, aunque prefieren las formas dominantes. En total encontré que el 7% de las unidades léxicas (20 de un total de 283) se encuentran en esta categoría. Se caracterizan por aparecer una o dos veces, siempre en concurrencia con el término estandar . Sólo uno de ellos, *clorox*, está incluido en *El diccionario del español chicano*.

7. Causas de la adopción de préstamos entre bilingües

En apartados anteriores se indicó que ni la selección lingüística, ni los motivos por los cuales se introducen los préstamos a las lenguas pueden predecirse. Sin embargo, se señaló que hay ciertas pautas generales que ayudan a entender por qué los bilingües seleccionan una palabra procedente de la otra lengua. Además de la introducción de préstamos para indicar realidades nuevas, que no es exclusiva del bilingüismo, hay otras razones que ayudan a entender la selección de términos procedentes de la otra lengua o las traducciones literales. Cabe indicar que se trata de pautas tan sólo, pues todavía se requiere de mucho estudio para conocer la motivación del préstamo lingüístico. Tomando en cuenta los préstamos en las respuestas del cuestionario, encuentro las siguientes pautas generales:

a. Préstamos debidos a necesidades descriptivas: *doble chin* (32%) o *dos barbas* (4%), frente al término común *papada* (60%).
b. Extensiones de significado: *ziper* (8%) por *bragueta* (48%); *africano* (3.9%) o *persona de color* (3.9%) en lugar del general *negro* (81%).
c. Préstamos debidos a dificultades en la producción: *palito* (4%) en lugar del común *paladar* (96%); *joints* (6%) o *juntas* (6%) por la voz *articulaciones* (69%) o *coyunturas* (19%).

8. Conclusiones

En este trabajo analicé el proceso de incorporación de los prestamos del inglés al español chicano y mexicano. La investigación de la forma en que los hablantes de una lengua adoptan las palabras de otra ha planteado problemas metodológicos que se presentan sobre todo en el ámbito del estudio del léxico de los bilingües por medio de cintas mangetófonicas.

En este artículo sugiero una alternativa metodológica al uso de cintas grabadas. Propongo recoger los materiales léxicos por medio del uso de un cuestionario léxico, complementado con preguntas de acceptabilidad.

Los resultados obtenidos muestran que este sistema permite la colección y evaluación de los datos de una manera más simple y eficaz que las cintas grabadas.

Asimismo, con este sistema no surge el problema de la separación de préstamos léxicos momentáneos de la alternacia de lenguas.

La colección adecuada de materiales permitió distinguir el grado de integración de cada préstamo y hacer distinciones sutiles. Por ejemplo, determinar la diferencia entre los préstamos del inglés incorporados en el español mexicano y en el chicano, frente a los préstamos propios del español chicano y los préstamos momentáneos.

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NOTAS

*La presente investigación se llevó a cabo gracias a una beca otorgada a la autora por el Senado Académico de la Universidad de California de Los Angeles.

[1] Basta revisar cualquier manual reciente sobre bilingüismo o cualquier artículo sobre este tema para que ello resulte patente. Véase, por ejemplo, Hoffman 1991, Lastra 1992, Pfaff 1979 o Poplack 1993.

[2] Lo préstamos permanentes tampoco necesitan estar adaptados ni morfológica ni fonéticamente. Piénsese en préstamos del español mexicano, tales como beige, club o tlapalería, que rompen con las pautas fonológicas y morfológicas del español general. Cabe añadir los muchos casos de interferencia fonética del español en las lenguas indígenas americanas introducidos a través de préstamos léxicos del español en situaciones de bilingüismo. Para ejemplos, véase Lastra 1992 y Parodi 1987.

[3] Ello también sucede en otras áreas de la lengua, para la sintaxis véase por ejemplo Silva Corvalán (1982)

[4] En el siguiente cuadro puede observarse el alto índice de alternancia del inglés y el español en bilingües cultos de Los Angeles (i.e. han asistido a la universidad). Estan tomados de cuatro horas de grabación (alt.=alternancia).

	#de alt. por hora	*# de alt. por minuto*	*% de palabras en inglés*	*% de palabras en español*
habla vernacular	188	3.1	50%	50%
habla formal	109	1.8	15%	85%

Nótese que en el habla vernacular el 50% de las palabras proceden del español y el 50% del inglés. Ello, unido a los ejemplos citados en el texto, demuestra la extremada dificultad en separar una lengua de la otra y en determinar cuándo hay préstamos y cuándo hay alternacia de lenguas en el estilo vernacular.

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Vowel Shift in Northern New Mexico Chicano English

Introduction

It is well known that Chicanos who speak Chicano English (=ChE) live in multilingual/multidialectal communities. Thus, there is much regional linguistic variation within the ChE dialect.[1] This pilot study uncovers one such dialectal variation spoken in Northern New Mexico (=NNM). In this particular region, the fluent ChE spoken as a first language most likely originated in the variety of English spoken by immigrants from Mexico who have learned English as a second language. This variety, however, became nativized by subsequent generations, and is often the only means of communication. (Peñalosa 1980: 118) Because the inhabitants of this predominantly monolingual environment are not recent immigrants from a spanish speaking country, their English is not a result of language interference but is strongly rooted in the region transcending age, race and socioeconomic status. The main focus of this pilot study is to describe the vowel shift in the monolingual ChE spoken in NNM which I have found to be systematic, proving that the ChE spoken specifically in this region is a dialect of StE worthy of study independent of other dialectal variations of ChE. This is an important subject since there exists a large and rapidly growing population of monolingual ChE speakers living in the southwestern United States, yet there are comparatively few studies done in this area.

Subjects

The subjects used in this pilot study are all monolingual ChE speakers from Las Vegas, Sapello and Santa Fe; these towns are all located in NNM. The subjects consist of a thirteen year old chicana, a thirty-four year old chicana high school mathematics teacher, a sixteen year old chicano, a fifty year old homemaker, a twenty-six year old chicano hardware store worker, a chicano dentist of forty-nine years of age and a fifteen year old non-chicana. My subjects were chosen as a convenient sample, the only criteria being that they had lived most of their lives in this region and that they only speak English.

Methods

The data for my findings was gathered in Las Vegas and Santa Fe, New Mexico and consists of unscripted taped conversations at a high school basketball game, with shoppers downtown, and in a hardware store. Following these conversations, the subjects were asked to read lists of words in which vowel sounds appeared in every possible environment and position such as word initial, word final, stressed and unstressed positions.

The study

This paper is organized as follows: I will first show the phonetic representations (=PR) of each vowel as they occur in StE and the change that they undergo in ChE. Following the examples of these vowel shifts, a rule will be formulated for each vowel phoneme, and the shift will be diagrammed on an American English vowel chart.[2] Finally, once each vowel shift has been described separately, I will combine all of the data to illustrate the vowel shift pattern in NNM ChE. While each vowel phoneme has many distinctive features, I will only include those which are relevant to the study at hand.

Analysis

I turn now to the analysis of the high tense vowels /i/ and /u/. StE vowel phonemes are compared with the ChE pronunciation of the same word to show the resulting PR of the ChE vowel.

/i/ (PR)

		StE /i/	ChE /I/
feel	-	[fi£]	[fI£]
eal	-	[i£]	[I£]
seal	-	[si£]	[sI£]
congeal	-	[kəndjí£]	[kəndjÍ£]
conceal	-	[kənsí£]	[kənsÍ£]
surreal	-	[səríl]	[sərÍ£]
ideal	-	[aydí£]	[aydÍ£]

/I/ =ChE (PR)

In ChE, the underlying representation (=UR) of the two StE phonemes /i/ and /I/ is different, yet they have only one PR before a velar /£/. Also, it may be important

for later comparison to note that this shift occurs on the primary stressed vowel. As the examples above illustrate, the [+high] [-back] phoneme /i/ in StE becomes the [-high] [-back] phoneme /I/ in ChE when on a primary stressed vowel before a velar £. This rule could be temporarily formulated as follows:

RULE A $\quad$ i ⟶ I / (Co) _____ £
+ stress

The following examples demonstrate the [+high] [+back] StE phoneme /u/ becoming the [-high] [+back] phoneme /ʊ/ when pronounced in ChE:

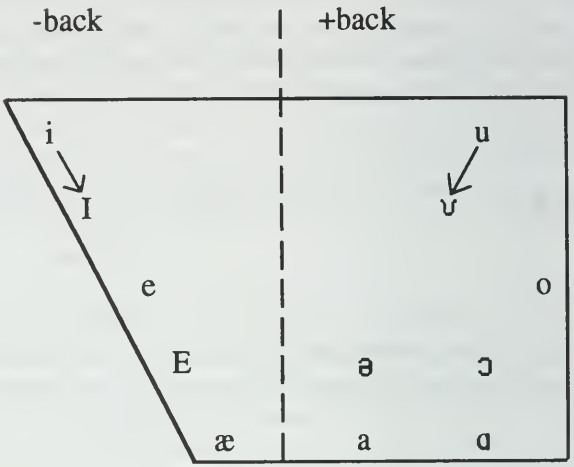
/u/		PR	
		StE	ChE
		/u/	/ ʊ /
pool	-	[pu£]	[pʊ£]
boot	-	[but]	[bʊt]
room	-	[rum]	[rʊm]
moody	-	[múdi]	[mʊ́di]
stupid	-	[stúpId]	[stʊ́pId]

/ʊ/
ChE (PR)

Again, the ChE UR of the two StE phonemes /u/ and /ʊ/ is different, however their actual PR is /ʊ/ when occurring before any consonant. The fact that this shift occurred again on the primary stressed vowel is noteworthy. The pattern here can be expressed as follows:

RULE B $\quad$ [u] - [ʊ] / (Co)_____C
+stress

Before proceeding to the next section, I will diagram the [+high] tense vowel shift in the NNM ChE of monolinguals on a vowel chart to provide a conceptual view of their behavior.



The next vowels on the chart are the [-high] lax vowels /I/ and /ʊ/. These do not change in ChE. The [-high] [-low] tense vowels /e/ and /o/, which usually occur in StE when they are dipthonguized as in the words *weight* and *boat*, are also stable in ChE; they behave the same as in StE. The next level however, which involves the [-high] [-low] lax vowels /E/, /ə/ and /ɔ/, does shift in ChE and is the focus of the next section of this study.

The following are examples showing the behavior of the [-high] [-low] [-back] phoneme /E/ which in ChE becomes the [+low] [-back] phoneme /æ/:

/E/		PR	
		StE	ChE
		/E/	/æ/
hell	-	[hEl]	[hæl]
bell	-	[bEl]	[bæl]
elderly	-	[Éldərli]	[ǽldərli]
elephant	-	[Éləfənt]	[ǽləfənt]

/æ/
(ChE - PR)

The preceding show that the UR of the phonemes /E/ and /æ/ have a PR of /æ/ in ChE when it ocurrs before a velar £. This shift takes place once again on the

primary stressed vowel for which I have developed the following rule:

<u>RULE C</u> [E] ⟶ [æ] / _____ £
+stress

We will observe now the contexts in which the [-high] [-low] [+back] phoneme /ə/ in StE becomes [+low] [+back] /a/ in ChE:

/ə/ -		PR	
		/ə/	/a/
stuff	-	[stəf]	[staf]
flood	-	[fləd]	[flad]
stuck	-	[stək]	[stak]
what	-	[wət]	[wat]
oven	-	[ə́vən]	[ávən]
must	-	[məst]	[mast]
bug	-	[bəg]	[bag]
cup	-	[cəp]	[cap]

/a/
(ChE - PR)

Above is the same phenomena where the two UR of the phonemes have one PR in ChE. I have formulated the above shift where the /ə/ becomes /a/ on the primary stressed vowel before any consonant in the following way:

<u>RULE D</u> [ə] ⟶ [a] / (Co)_____ C
+stress

The next examples illustrate the shift of the last vowel to be studied /ɔ/:

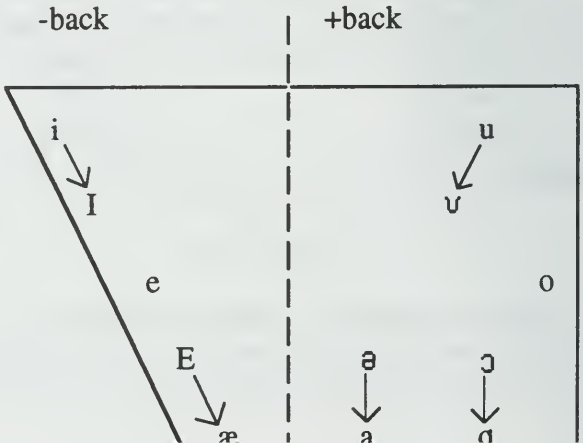
/ɔ/ -		PR	
		/ɔ/	/ɑ/
hot	-	[hɔt]	[hɑt]
august	-	[ɔ́gəst]	[ɑ́gəst]
mommy	-	[mɔ́mi]	[mɑ́mi]
far	-	[fɔr]	[fɑr]
polish	-	[pɔ́lIʃ]	[pɑ́lIʃ]

/ɑ/
(ChE - PR)

I have developed the following rule for this shift in which the [-high] [-low] [+back] phoneme /ɔ/ becomes the [+low] [+back] phoneme /ɑ/ before any consonant and on the primary stressed vowel:

RULE E [ɔ] ⟶ [ɑ] / (Co) _____ C
+stress

The above examples show the underlying and phonetic and surface representations of the three [-high] [-low] stressed vowels. Let us now complete this part of the study by adding the vowel shifts from this section to those of the high vowels from the preceding section for a comprehensive view of the NNM ChE vowel shift.



As shown in the previous data, all the shifts appear only the primary stressed vowel. In addition, we can now assert, by looking at the above ChE vowel shift chart, that, in every case studied, the shift consists in a drop of one notch on the vowel chart. All this data will now be combined to formulate these two constants into the least possible rules, in this case two. One for the [-back] vowels and another for the [+back] ones since there are only two major contexts in which these shifts take place: before a velar £ and before any consonant respectively.

I. $\begin{bmatrix} i \\ E \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} I \\ æ \end{bmatrix} \; / \; \underline{\quad\quad} \; £$

+stress

II. $\begin{bmatrix} u \\ ə \\ ɔ \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} ʊ \\ a \\ ɑ \end{bmatrix} \; / \; (Co)\underline{\quad\quad} \; C$

+stress

Conclusion

The study of English dialects is rather complex. In this pilot study I have found a vowel shift pattern unique to a region whose communities are characterized by a situation wherein the use of ChE transcends age, race and socioeconomic status so that speakers include: teachers, doctors, the clergy, homemakers, radio announcers, business people, teenagers, blue collar employees and even non-chicanos. Since a dialect is defined as the form or variety of a spoken language peculiar to a region, community, social group, occupational group etc . . . and is regarded as being mutually intelligible, I propose that NNM ChE be considered a dialect of StE.[3] Further supporting this argument is the fact that NNM ChE has undergone processes which are historically not new to dialects: vowel shifts are a well-known occurrence in languages;[4] in addition, I believe that the dialect described in this study is the result of a situation where the first variety of a language (English as a second language spoken by immigrants from Mexico or from Spain via Mexico) became nativized by the subsequent generations. This is not a new phenomena either; it was

discussed in depth to describe the dialect of Brazilian Portuguese, Caipira Portuguese. (Parodi & Quicoli 1992)

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NOTES

[1] This subject is dealt with quite extensively in *Form and Function in Chicano English* (J. Ornstein-Galicia 1984) and *Chicano English: an Ethnic Contact Dialect* (Penfield, J and J. Ornstein-Galicia 1985).
[2] The American English Vowel Chart used in this study was taken from Peter Ladefoged's *A Course in Phonetics*. 1982.
[3] This definition is in Webster's New World Dictionary. 1980. 389.
[4] These vowel system changes are summarized in Francis Katamba's *An introduction to phonology*. 1989. 137-140.

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Consonantal Variations in Chicano English

Introduction

Pronunciation is a prominent factor that clearly marks the differences found between varieties of a language. A series of investigations in this field concludes that during the learning of a second language, a new phonological system is derived different from the native language as well as the target language. Studies about the English spoken by Chicanos produced results that point at a structural consistency and temporal stability that forced many linguists to reconsider previously established theories about language interference. The English spoken by Chicanos is clearly distinctive; however, it lacks of many features that characterizes recent English learners.

The purpose of my paper will be to look at the variations of particular consonants at the syllable-building level in Chicano English. I shall focus on the interchange between the fricatives and the affricates palatals. I hope to bring a clear analysis of the roles of the consonants, in particular B / V and tš / š, and the variations they undergo as they are first learned by an older generation of non-native speakers and later embraced as a first language by subsequent generations, thus producing a distinctive way of speech characteristic of an ethnic community. This paper is intended to be a "pilot study" that could lead to further investigation on this subject.

Minimal Distinctions

Marguerite MacDonald's article on *The influence of Spanish Phonology on the English spoken by United States Hispanics* is a comprehensive study of this interesting subject. Through out her article she provides detailed analysis that leads her to conclude that Hispanic English derives much of its phonologic identity from Spanish when minimal distinctions are involved. However, MacDonald readily points out that Spanish transfer must be supported by independent motivation. She highlights for us the multiple factors that must be taken into account. She strongly believes that "it is the reinforcement of the ancestral language phonology by

multiple sources, including markedness, universality, first-language acquisition processes, and co-occurrence in the host-language varieties, which prolong restructuring in the interlanguage so that fossilization results" (MacDonald, p. 233) To this variation, she attributes the phonologic identity of the ethnic variety of English.

The potential of Transfer

MacDonald explains that Spanish and English share many of the same consonant phonemes. English, however, outnumbers Spanish in the category of fricatives. Many of the phonemes in these two languages may be identical but, they still may differ in phonetic realization and sequencing of segments. Looking at these differences MacDonald points out that the potential influence of the Spanish sound system on Hispanic English can be quite pronounced.

Obstruents

In this category, MacDonald produces the following conclusion:

(Spanish)

Manner of Articulation	Point of Articulation						
	Bil	Lab	Den	Alv	Pal	Vel	Glo
Stops							
(-voice)	p		t			k	
(+voice)	b		d			g	
Fricatives							
(-voice)		f	s	or s		x	
Affricates							
(-voice)					č		

English

	Bil	Labd	Inter	Alv	Pal	Vel	Glo
Stops							
(-voice)	p			t		k	
(+voice)	b			d		g	
Fricatives							
(-voice)		f	Θ	s	š		h
(+voice)		v	ð	z	ž		
Affricates							
(-voice)					č		
(+voice)					j		

In Spanish, the obstruents have one phonetic manifestation that is an unaspirated noncontinuant realization. They can occur in syllable-final position within a word and they do not occur in word-finally. Del Rosario (1970) and Guitart(1976) explain that even in syllable final, obstruents normally neutralize in point of articulation. In some cases they can be entirely deleted.

Example:

b d g —> b̪ d̪ g̪ /elsewhere
[la b̪ela]

b —> ø / __sC
[+obstruent, -voice]
[substrato] —> [sustrato]

In English, obstruents are aspirated in syllable-initial position preceding a stressed vowel. MacDonald points out that English obstruents can occur in onset or coda position syllable within a word or word-finally.
Example:

boxer	tub
cabbage	cab

Realization of /v/ as /B/ or /b̪/

In the case of obstruents, MacDonald adds that in parts of Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the United States, /b/ frequently is realized as /v/. Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia (1985) in their study show that among Chicano English speakers it is difficult at times to distinguish a /v/ from a /b/. While conducting my own study with Los Angeles Chicanos I also noticed that with words such as 'level', 'invited' and 'vacation', many of the speakers often pronounced them as: le̪bel, inbited and bacation. This leads me to believe that some Chicano English speakers were simply applying the Spanish phonemic realization of /b̪/ for both the orthographic /b/ and /v/. This would seem that the interchange of /b/ and /v/ is most likely a case of transfer.

Arguments against interference

The idea of interference or transfer has often lead Chicano English to be characterized as poorly spoken English. Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia point out that it was not until 1970 that new light was shed on this subject. While observing and studying Chicano English, researchers began to question whether the concept of interference was really that appropriate. Garland Bills (1977) argue the following: "But the speech of very many Chicanos appears to exhibit clear signs of temporal stability, structural consistency, and internal (not just external) predict-

ability. In other words, it seems to represent a systematically distinct competence -a dialect. (Penfield & Ornstein, p. 34)"

One of Bills' main arguments against interference, which is also the focus of my paper, is the fact that many linguistics aspects of Chicano English are not predictable when we contrast and compare Spanish and English. At the phonologic level, Bill brings to our attention the particular uses of 'tš' and 'š' as an example to confirm the fact that the argument of interference is no longer valid. He points out that among Chicanos one can frequently hear an exchange between the 'tš' and the 'š'. With words like 'Check' one hears 'Sheck' or 'Sheynsh' for change. With these examples, Bill concludes that "a contrastive analysis of Spanish and English would predict the opposite, since most dialects of Spanish do not even have the š sound". (Penfield & Ornstein, p. 34)

Alternation of tš and š

Among linguists, there are several debates trying to explain the free substitution of the tš for the š and vice-versa. One of the two main theories in this field is the process of merger proposed by Ornstein. The other theory, the process of unmerger is proposed by Wald. Ornstein believes that these two sounds are being confused because they are actually merging. The result we are obtaining is actually varying degrees of these two phonemes. Wald, on the other hand, claims the exact opposite. He believes that tš and š are in the process of being distinguished thus, at times, they are confused. Still others believe that the alternation of tš and š is simply due to confusion.

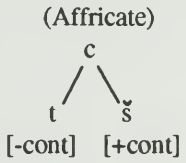
Opposing arguments like these led to a more careful look at standard Spanish and English. In standard Spanish š sound does not exist. The interference explanation does not apply here because it could not explain the reason for words pronounced "sheck" when it clearly required a tš sound. Further investigations suggested that sociolinguistic factor must be taken into account. One finds such alternation of tš and š not only among Chicanos but also in Spanish of non-English speakers along the border. Such a case leads Penfield and Ornstein to question, "does this suggest that language contact with English has permeated even the monolingual Spanish-speaking community or is there a possibility that this speech trait represents contact with regional varieties of Spanish which do indeed have this pronunciation?"(Penfield & Ornstein, p. 40)

Although an answer has not yet been found, many linguists have resorted to universal linguistic tendencies to explain such a case. The result is the following, "while most languages of the world which have tš also have sh, the reverse is not true." (Penfield & Ornstein, p. 40) This means that languages that have the tš sound will have the tendency to produce its counterpart, the š sound. Such an explanation would account for the alternation of tš and š in Chicano English.

Discussion of traits

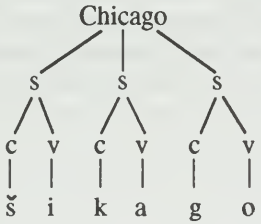
In my interest to develop a better understanding of the alternation of consonants such as ts and s, I begin my investigation by looking at its segmental structure with the help of Katamba's book *An introduction to Phonology*.

At the segmental structure ts and s are described as follows:



Relevant trait to distinguish ts̆ from s̆ is:

From this segmental structure of ts̆, I proceed to look at its syllable building level. A word such as 'Chicago' is described as follow:



Methods

Three subjects were enrolled in this study (2 female and 1 male). All subjects were born in the Los Angeles area and were between the ages of 20-25.

Subjects were then asked to read a reading sample that contains words that exhibit Chicano English variation. (Appendix 1) These words were presented in a paragraph and as individual words. The paragraph was used to demonstrate any variation that may occur in a context of narrating a text. The individual words were used to test if such variation was influenced by the position of the consonant in a given word or phrases.

Results

From the data gathered above, the following results can be ascertained. In words such as chapel and bachelor, using the CV phonology model the results are as follows:

Word: **Chapel**
Alternation from tš —> š

Standard English

Chicano English

c* syllabic nucleus

From the above model, we observe that in standard English (StE) the onset is branching while in Chicano English (ChE) the onset becomes non-branching. We exhibit a simplification of the onset that seems inclined to maintain the model CV (canonical syllable).

Word: **Bachelor**
Alternation from tš —> š

StE

ChE

In StE the rhyme is branching while in ChE, the rhyme becomes non-branching.

In ChE the rhyme is simplified. This example shows that such a simplification can occur both at the onset and at the rhyme.

Word: Shoes
Alternation from š —> tš

In StE the onset exhibits no branching while in ChE we observe the opposite effect. This phenomenon might at first lead one to believe that the alternation of tš to š and vice-versa is unpredictable. However, from my data I show that out of the sample words provided in my survey, the alternation from tš to š was by far more frequent than the alternation from š to tš. The frequency of tš—>š over š—>tš alternation is 4:1. The data obtained seems to reaffirm what Universal Linguists have pointed out. If a language already has the tš sound, it will likely adopt it counterpart, the š sound; however, the reverse is not necessarilly true. The fact that some ChE speakers actually do alternate š with tš although infrequently, only makes us realize that there are multi-causal factors that are not always phonologically based.

Some tendencies

In the tš to š alternation we observe that such changes are associated with particular vowels. From the list of words below, it can be ascertained that tš tends to change to š when located near a [-high] vowel.

Words:

Bachelor
Impeachment
Check
Chapel

tš—> š / _v ; #_
[-high,]

As for the š to tš alternation the following is derived:

Words:

Chicago	
Shoes	š—> tš / _v; #_
Sheriff	[-low]

Since the s to ts alternation is rather infrequent, although with its due tendency, I continue to look at some sociolinguistic effects that need to be addressed in order to see the complexity of the matter at hand.

Sociolinguistic Effects

Marguerite MacDonald (1989) and many other linguists attribute these observable variations in ChE to several factors that merit further study. MacDonald presents the many factors that contribute to variations in a language that often are overlooked in research. I shall summarize her observations in the following list:

1) Age
2) Gender
3) Choice of language spoken at home
4) Socioeconomic differences and job status
5) Education
6) Personal factors

MacDonald explains that the age at which children begin to learn English and/or Spanish does affect the acuteness of their hearing and their ability to discern sounds. Men and women due to cultural background do receive unequal exposure to languages. Men because of their involvement in a labor force tend to be bilingual. And as for the socioeconomic differences and education, these factors have tremendous impact on language variations.

I distinguish the personal factor in particular because in my investigation I noticed that the personality of my informants had a strong effect on their speech. Some informants were self-conscious when speaking English. They would speak softly and when they encountered words that they felt uncomfortable pronouncing, they often said them quickly. Although I can see the effect this has in language variability, it is very difficult to research and study.

Conclusion

Evidently, there are phonologic differences between Chicano English and standard English. However, it is no longer adequate to assume that the characteristics of Chicano English are a consequence of Spanish, even when it exhibits variations from the monolingual English community. Clearly there are forces at work to accentuate these differences, but most importantly, there are observable tendencies that show that there is a distinct competence. With respect to the consonantal variation there is yet no microanalysis done in this aspect. Hopefully

until much more extensive work is done, it will continue to be the subject of much attention and debate.

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Appendix 1: Reading Sample

To plan for my brother's *bachelor* party I went to an ATM machine to get some cash. (bašelor)

For the *bachelor* party, I'm preparing his favorite dish which is chicken.

The party was great until someone poured a bottle of whisky into the fruit punch. People started pushing each other and many of my bookshelves fell.

The house was such a mess, *much* of the decoration was trashed.
(muš)

Because of the incident at the *bachelor's* party, many of his friends didn't show up at the *chapel*.
(šapel)

After organizing the *bachelor* party I went on a long *vacation.*
(bacašion)

-Michigan	+Chicago
-machine	*bachelor
-shampoo	-cash
*chapel	*impeachment
*check	*poaching
-a chair	*a chimney
+shoes	-sheets
-punch	*such
-bashful	-cashier

* Alternation from tš to š
\- Do not exhibit any variation
\+ Alternation from š to tš

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REVIEW

HERNÁNDEZ-GUTIÉRREZ, MANUEL DE JESÚS. *El colonialismo interno en la narrativa chicana: el Barrio, el Anti-Barrio y el Exterior*. Tempe, Arizona: Bilingual Press, 1994. 262 páginas.

Esta investigación, que empezó como tesis doctoral en la universidad de Stanford, se publica como parte de un esfuerzo mayor por reflexionar sobre el rol sociocultural de la narrativa chicana. Desde una perspectiva anglosajona, el instrumento metodológico que emplea Hernández-Gutiérrez podría considerarse anacrónico por el descrédito de los discursos políticos descolonizadores, como demuestra Richard Roth sobre la experiencia colonial. Pero resulta que la perspectiva de Hernández-Gutiérrez no cae en el juego despolitizador de dicha crítica que se centra en la problemática discursiva misma, sino en la interdependencia inestable de la producción cultural con las formaciones socioeconómicas que la originan. Esta investigación demuestra que el método es válido si se adecua a su objeto de estudio. Valiéndose de la categoría de *colonialismo interno* de sociólogos e historiadores (Joan W. Moore, Rodolfo Acuña, Edward Murguía, Guillermo Flores, Carlos Muñoz y Mario Barrera), Hernández-Gutiérrez describe la narrativa chicana como una alternativa a la asimilación a la cultura angloamericana. Las dificultades metodológicas para analizar este fenómeno de asimilación, son enormes debido a su complejidad actual. Por esta razón, la premisa de este trabajo tiene que ver con una visión pluralista de la sociedad estadounidense cuya estabilidad política también descansa, como lo demuestran investigaciones recientes (consultar por ejemplo los trabajos de John C. Harles y de David M. Reimers), sobre el aporte real que los inmigrantes hacen desde su heterogeneidad étnica.

El primer capítulo ofrece un panorama sociocultural de la narrativa que brinda una autorrepresentación a la comunidad chicana, principalmente en la década de los años setenta, en el sudoeste y medioeste de los Estados Unidos. Sin caer en reduccionismos, este análisis permite comprobar que los chicanos pertenecen a la sociedad estadounidense como segmentos subordinados de atribución clasista (Barrera) y que su literatura, por ello, se centra primeramente en el tema de la identidad, liberándose de los prejuicios críticos que la clasificaban como un

subgénero de la literatura anglosajona.

El segundo capítulo estudia la traducción histórica de un proyecto ideológico de autorrepresentación. Esta conciencia colectiva es promovida por las actividades de revistas, editoras y círculos literarios chicanos donde se destacan los narradores de los setenta (Tomás Rivera, Nick C. Vaca, Miguel Méndez-M., Oscar Zeta Acosta, Ron Arias, J.L. Navarro, Richard Vásquez, Estela Portillo, Rudolfo A. Anaya, Rolando R. Hinojosa-S. y Alfredo de la Torre). Basándose en el modelo de Pierre Macherey (*A Theory of Literary Production*), Hernández-Gutiérrez articula los elementos que hacen posible la representación ideológica chicana: el sujeto narrador, los objetos temáticos matrices (el viaje, la escritura y la descolonización) y la fábula de *quién soy*, así como la reformulación de los niveles de figuración de esta autorrepresentación: el mito revelador de Aztlán y los espacios estructurantes (el Barrio, el Anti-Barrio y el Exterior). La convergencia de estos elementos permite el surgimiento de un nuevo género literario chicano: la narrativa de la autoidentidad.

Como dato interesante, a diferencia de la dispersión editorial de los setenta, Hernández-Gutiérrez observa que la narrativa chicana en los años ochenta impulsa reimpresiones de clásicos, reediciones de los principales narradores, ediciones de mujeres, obra crítica, de esta manera abriendo espacio a otras narrativas como la neorriqueña y cubanoamericana, así como promoviendo la participación de narradores latinoamericanos y la interacción con los medios editoriales angloamericanos del este. En el capítulo tres se analiza el proyecto de asimilación a través del recuento de las perspectivas de autorrepresentación que el discurso narrativo angloamericano había hegemonizado. Se concentra en un análisis de esta representación ideológica y su figuración en el *Pocho* de José Antonio Villarreal; aunque Hernández-Gutiérrez reitera varias veces que Villarreal se considera "American writer", destaca los avances que el espacio pochista significa para el proyecto chicano.

El cuarto capítulo se enfoca en el espacio migrante del sudoeste con el estudio de *...Y no se lo tragó la tierra* de Tomás Rivera. Hernández-Gutiérrez destaca cómo, a partir de la narración centrada en los avatares de los trabajadores migrantes del sudoeste, se alcanza la condición del discurso narrativo mexicanoestadounidense: "trabajador migrante, subordinado, residente del Barrio, peregrino, en conflicto con el Anti-Barrio, desconocido en el Exterior - miembro de una *colonia interna* - pero con la autoafirmación cultural y el derecho a la autoimagen" (141).

En el capítulo cinco, Hernández-Gutiérrez analiza *Peregrinos de Aztlán* de Miguel Méndez para resaltar una evolución en el proyecto ideológico al desarrollar el espacio indigenista como base de su necesaria crítica social y perspectiva utópica. El peregrino chicano que no se ubica en la sociedad angloamericana ni en la mexicana, halla en el rescate de la tradición oral yaqui y mestiza una representación espacial más accesible que le permite resistir la explotación del Anti-Barrio y la dependencia económica del Exterior. A pesar de la precariedad del Barrio, el chicano ha avanzado hacia una ubicación sociocultural precisa.

En el capítulo seis, se analiza el sistema de [personajes] como un sistema de signos dinámico. La categoría de [personajes], al estar entre corchetes, suspende por

un momento su significado o contenido tradicional, fijo y estereotipado. En este sistema, el individuo [personaje] es más un tipo que instituye su representatividad a través de una tipología semiótica que toma en cuenta la dinámica y las transformaciones de los roles: El pocho como una expresión individualista del Anti-Barrio, que se carateriza por su pasividad colectiva y su deseo de asimilación; el mexicano como expresión del Exterior, del subdesarrollo, de la rigidez social y de la reificación cultural; El *American*, como representante del Anti-Barrio que alcanza el desarrollo, la movilidad social y, por supuesto, la asimilación; el chicano, como encarnación de los principios ideológicos del Barrio: su autodeterminación y su derecho de pertenencia a una comunidad sin opresión. Hernández-Gutiérrez analiza cómo funciona este sistema de [personajes] en la obra de Villarreal, Rivera y Méndez. Quizás si el modelo gremasiano utilizado hubiera aprovechado de la semiótica de las intersubjetividades de Landowski, Hernández-Gutiérrez habría formulado más detalladamente su crítica a la asimilación en sus dispositivos centrales. Aún falta una formulación de los mecanismos de descolonización para evitar que el proyecto chicano caiga y se estanque en los mismos errores de los nacionalismos latinoamericanos.

Sus conclusiones confirman la necesidad de profundizar la investigación, pues el proyecto ideológico de autodeterminación no termina. Es un proceso de búsquedas que no se agota en un sólo género como el desarrollado por Rivera y Méndez. Por ello, Hernández anuncia un próximo estudio de *Memories of the Alhambra* de Nash Candelaria, de *The Road to tamazunchale* de Ron Arias y de *Generaciones y semblanzas* de Rolando Hinojosa.

La documentada bibliografía final ofrece un prolijo panorama de la dirección de las investigaciones futuras sobre el rol de la narrativa chicana. Sin retroceder hasta las crónicas de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca como hacen otras versiones de la tradición chicana, muestra la continuidad evolutiva desde *Un cadáver sobre el trono* de A.A. Orihuela (1854) hasta la narrativa de los 80 (de la diferenciación del sujeto chicano) y de los 90 (de la década del multiculturalismo). El recuento de antologías, de textos narrativos, de 60 tesis doctorales y de bibliografía crítica sobre esta narrativa chicana, además de los complementos de otras literaturas y de la historia y sociología sobre el mexicanoestadounidense, refuerzan la hipótesis sobre el desarrollo de la autodeterminación y su próxima integración al cambiante mundo angloamericano.

Por supuesto que esta integración implica una superación de la colonización cultural a la que el/la chicano/a está sometido/a, en la medida en que, para afirmar y desarrollar una identidad colectiva, se necesita cierta presencia inmediata de los otros (Landowski 116). Este aspecto de la investigación merece complementarse con el estudio de la problemática de las diferentes colectividades latinas que en vez de asimilarse, buscan una integración en una sociedad pluralista. Las investigadoras de la U de New Mexico, Santa Arias y Erlinda González-Berry comprueban las líneas de fuerza del análisis de Hernández-Gutiérrez en su panorama sobre "la escritura latina" en los Estados Unidos y destacan la importancia de la literatura

chicana (653-63). Por primera vez esta aproximación plural se publica en un manual de literatura latinoamericana. Hernández-Gutiérrez también toma en cuenta esta perpectiva respecto a la relación de la comunidad chicana con las otras comunidades caribeñas, centroamericanas y sudamericanas, pero no la desarrolla a fondo, porque su objetivo es analizar en profundidad los núcleos ideológicos y culturales de la identidad chicana. Tanto su discurso crítico, como el de Arias y González-Berry, no excluyen la tarea de textualizar y definir la identidad de los agentes productores de cultura. Por un lado, Hernández-Gutiérrez apuesta por superar los dispositivos de segregación y de asimilación de la cultura hegemónica. Por el otro, es consciente de que esa búsqueda no sólo se da en el nivel estético de una narrativa, sino en los niveles socioculturales donde la integración signifique vivir la identidad colectiva para multiplicar los beneficios que se derivan de su misma alteridad.

El difícil balance de fuerzas, proyectos y posibilidades de la comunidad chicana en los Estados Unidos al menos cuenta con un sólido punto de referencia que apenas se conocía: la propia tradición cultural. Hernández-Gutiérrez tiene el mérito de llamar la atención a la comunidad chicana y a otras comunidades culturales, que ese punto necesario de referencia debe preparar con más cuidado sus estrategias de lucha contra el sistemático abuso, así como debe animar la búsqueda de la justa convivencia. Sus reflexiones y su análisis de la narrativa chicana brindan al lector un punto de vista constructivo desde la propia palabra, móvil, "zafada" de los moldes, siempre buscando el encuentro original.

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